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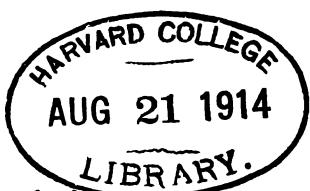


CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH ETHICS.

A DISSERTATION
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FOR THE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS AND BOOKS OF REFERENCE.

CHAPTER I. **Mill**: *Utilitarianism* (1864).

Contrast with Kant. Pleasure the end. Quantity and quality of pleasures. Passage to disinterestedness: psychologically through association: ethically.

CHAPTER II. **Darwin**: *Origin of Species* 6th ed. 1882: *Descent of Man* 2nd ed. 1877.

Organism and environment. Variation. Natural Selection. Habit. Instinct—natural and domestic. Growth of moral sense. End of conduct.

CHAPTER III. **Spencer**: *Data of Ethics*; **Stephen**: *Science of Ethics* (1882).

§ 1. *Spencer*. A. Descriptive—from physical, biological, psychological and sociological standpoint. B. Normative: ultimate end happiness; immediate end distribution of means to happiness. Egoism. Altruism.

§ 2. *Stephen*. Conduct determined by feeling and reason. The individual and the race. Society an organism. The family the social unit. Contents of the Moral Law. Sympathy. Sanction of Morality.

CHAPTER IV. **Sidgwick**: *Methods of Ethics* 3rd ed. 1884; **Sorley**: *Ethics of Naturalism* (1885); **Alexander**: *Moral Order and Progress* (1889); **Muirhead**: *Elements of Ethics* (1892). Pleasure. Desire. Is desire always interested? Sidgwick's account of the end, criticised. Desiderata in the evolution theory.

CHAPTER V. **Martineau**: *Types of Ethical Theory* 2nd ed. 1886.

Perception and Conscience. Objects of Moral Judgment. Springs of action—psychological and moral order. Duty to God, to man, to self.

CHAPTER VI. **Green**: *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2nd ed. 1884.

Theory of knowledge. Want, impulse, desire. Desire and Intellect. Desire and Will. Intellect and Will. The Moral Ideal: its personal and formal character; its origin and development. Its application to Conduct.

CHAPTER I.

UTILITARIANISM.

“Kant, in the Metaphysics of Ethics, lays down an universal first principle as the origin and ground of moral obligation; it is this:—‘So act, that the rule on which thou actest would admit of being adopted as a law by all rational beings’. But when he begins to deduce from this precept any of the actual duties of morality, he fails, almost grotesquely, to show that there would be any contradiction, any logical (not to say physical) impossibility, in the adoption by all rational beings of the most outrageously immoral rules of conduct. All he shows is that the *consequences* of their universal adoption would be such as no one would choose to incur.”

So run the opening sentences of Mill’s treatise on *Utilitarianism*. They point to an implied contrast in the views of the two writers, to a totally different standpoint. When dealing with the Practical Reason Kant alights upon a “factum” of consciousness: the moral law he regards as an indisputable fact of reason in its practical application. And just as the slightest admixture of the empirical, as a condition in a mathematical demonstration, would lower the value of the proof and do away with its universal cogency, so the slightest consideration of the pleasure or pain that might result as the consequence of any particular action would mar the worth of moral judgment, would, in fact, appeal not to the reason which is universal in man but to the sensibility of the individual, to what is ever changing in him, varying with every

variation in the conditions of his existence, external and internal. Mill maintains that the result of Kant's procedure ends in something only short of the grotesque. Ethics can not be thus formulated without regard to the conditions of organic life and the thousand considerations which arise in consequence of differences in the conditions which hem in the individual or assist him in his growth. Rather than proceed then from the consciousness of the individual regarded as free from the limitations of space and time—with unbounded indifference to the conditions of earthly existence —, Mill prefers to give the problem a complete turn, to take as his basis the firm ground of experience. 'Give me a *πον οτω*', said the ancient Greek philosopher, contemplating the possibilities of the lever, 'and I will move the world'. Here at length we have a solid basis to work upon—the experience of past generations as represented in the institutions of to-day, and a never-failing power to work our machinery—the ever-present desire of the individual for pleasure and his aversion to pain. Not that we have here anything particularly new: we simply have forces old as the life of man, and carefully observed in their working ever since the ancient Greeks came to look at nature intelligently. We proceed to show, briefly, how Mill dealt with the materials at hand.

"The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure."¹⁾ We are to regard man, for ethical purposes, as a creature of impulses and desires. As an individual he is not self-sufficient, but related to the external world; it is there his impulses for the most part find their playground; it is thence his desires gain satisfaction. Desire is always for pleasure. Desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as

¹⁾ *Utilitarianism*, p. 9.

painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable: to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a physical and metaphysical impossibility. Accordingly desires would seem to allow of being arranged according to a graduated scale, or rather two scales—that of intensity and that of worth. “Utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, &c., of the former—that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature. And on all these points Utilitarians have fully proved their case; but they might have taken the other, and, as it may be called, higher ground, with entire consistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others.”¹⁾ This distinction of quality among pleasures is essential—though perhaps suicidal—to Mill’s system; it attracts in cases where simple quantitative happiness would be out of question; it surrounds pleasure with a certain halo of moral worth. It is this consideration that attests the reasonableness of employing the higher faculties: but its introduction only tends greatly to increase the difficulties of the hedonistic calculus. With these difficulties in the way of hedonism Mill does not busy himself: it is enough for him that the case is so. “The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people do actually desire it. Each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This being a fact we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require that happiness is a good. Happiness has made out its title as *one* of the ends of conduct. But it has not, by this alone, proved itself to be the sole criterion.”²⁾

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 12. ²⁾ p. 52.

So far we have kept well within the lines of egoism. How are we to make the passage to disinterestedness? Instead of following Hobbes' method and invoking the aid of the state for the maintenance of public morality, Mill prefers to make use of the psychological law elaborated by Hartley—the law of the "*association of ideas*". "Life would be a poor thing, very ill provided with sources of happiness, if there were not this provision of nature by which things originally indifferent, but conducive to, or otherwise associated with, the satisfaction of our primitive desires, become in themselves sources of pleasure more valuable than the primitive pleasures, both in permanency, in the space of human existence they are capable of covering, and even in intensity." This principle explains the miser's love of money: this is the spring whence flows the love of power or of fame. "Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good of this description. There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such with as great intensity as any other good; and with this difference between it and the love of money, of power, or of fame, that all of these may, and often do, render the individual noxious to the other members of the society to which he belongs, whereas there is nothing which makes him so much a blessing to them as the cultivation of the disinterested love of virtue. And, consequently, the utilitarian standard, while it tolerates and approves those other acquired desires, up to the point beyond which they would be more injurious to the general happiness than promotive of it, enjoins and requires the cultivation of the love of virtue up to the greatest strength possible, as being above all things important to the general happiness."¹⁾

From the *psychological* point of view, then, the barrier that separates self-interest from altruistic affection does not appear insurmountable: from the nature of the case I pursue my own

¹⁾ p. 57.

happiness, and owing to the acknowledged working of the laws of association, my conduct may be such as to bring about the happiness of others; but when we are enjoined and required to cultivate this disinterested love of virtue, in other words, to adopt the utilitarian standard, we are justified in asking why *ought* we to pursue the happiness of others rather than our own. What *ethical* justification is there for the exclusive adoption of one out of two possible and perfectly "natural" courses? Different answers may be given:—

(a.) An attempt may be made to show that in the long run a person most devoted to the "greatest happiness" principle might somehow or other obtain the greatest happiness for himself. Mill does not make the attempt. Rather, "the utilitarian morality does recognise in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. A sacrifice which does not increase or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted. The only self-renunciation which it applauds is devotion to the happiness, or to some of the means of happiness of others; either of mankind collectively, or of individuals within the limits imposed by the collective interests of mankind."¹⁾

(b.) "No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good; that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, *therefore*, a good to the aggregate of persons."²⁾ This is a surprising syllogism from Mill: it contains the fallacy of *quaternio terminorum*, and credits "the aggregate of persons" with a power of collective willing which, to say the least of it, is extraordinary.

(c.) Another method would be to empty the individual of all characteristic content, to ignore the disturbing element in

¹⁾ p. 24. ²⁾ p. 52.

the problem, and from easier data to arrive at the desired conclusion. Adopting Bentham's position that "everybody is to count for one, nobody for more than one", Mill maintains that as between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires the agent to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. But when it is laid down that the only desirable end is happiness, the meaning surely is, that nothing is desirable for A but the happiness of A; and when it is said that A's happiness is no more desirable than B's, the meaning is, that A's is no more desirable for A than B's is for B; from which it is fair to conclude that B has the same warrant for pursuing his own happiness that A has; but not that to either of them the happiness of the other is, or ought to be, as desirable as his own.

(d.) Mill adopts the only remaining method. It consists in a cutting of the knot, in claiming that altruism is as natural as egoism, and far more important in its issues. "There is a natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality. This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind—the desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures. The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body; and this association is riveted more and more, as mankind are further removed from the state of savage independence. So long as people are cooperating, their ends are identified with those of others; there is at least a temporary feeling that the interests of others are their own interests. Thus a person comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who *of course* pays regard to others. The smallest germs of this feeling are laid hold of and nourished by the contagion of sympathy and the influence of education; and a complete web of corroborative association is woven round it by the powerful agency of the external sanctions. If we now suppose this feeling of unity to be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion, directed, as it once

was in the case of religion, to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and by the practice of it, I think that no one, who can realise this conception, will feel any misgiving about the sufficiency of the ultimate sanctions for the Happiness morality.”¹⁾

CHAPTER II.

DARWINISM.

Mill, after Adam Smith and Hartley, traced the working of the laws of sympathy and association in the building up—within the life of the individual and from an egoistic basis—of a structure in which self-interest becomes virtue, and selflove touched by sympathy becomes benevolence. The suddenness of the change may at times seem surprising—so surprising, indeed, that it was found necessary to presuppose in the individual “a natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality”. If suddenness of change however were the only obstacle to the acceptance of egoism, thus modified by association and sympathy, as a workable theory, no one need any longer hesitate to regard Utilitarianism as *the* method of ethics—so successfully has the idea of Time been worked by the evolutionists in explanation of organic, and, as they claim, of mental and moral differentiation. Not that mere lapse of time by itself does anything either for or against the process; it is only so far important, and its importance in this respect is great, that it gives a better chance of beneficial variations arising, and of their being selected, accumulated, and fixed. The life of the individual is no longer the Alpha and Omega of ethical interest, in this “change from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, through continuous differentiations and integrations”.

What are the essentials in this doctrine of evolution?

1) pp. 46—49.

more especially, as stated by Darwin? We do not exactly start with a chaos, though all is in flux: nothing is, all is evolving. It is found convenient to start with organisms; and in its earliest stages evolution is little more than a mechanical process of adaptation between an organism and its environment. Organic development is then dependent on two factors —on internal and external conditions: it is a compromise between both, a process of assimilation which reaches its limit only in two cases—(a) when complete adaptation between organism and environment is attained, and (b) when the discrepancy between both is so great that adaptation cannot follow quickly enough, leading in this case directly to death, as in the former case indirectly. Within these limits of maximum and minimum adaptation we have a wide range of adaptation more or less perfect, and affording occasion for all degrees of variation.

“Our ignorance of the laws of variation is profound.” The nature of the most elementary organism is a mystery; we can only observe the relation that exists between it and its environment—by way of action and reaction—and from such observation we may be able to set forth some of the conditions that must be present before growth, variation, development can take effect. Plainly the organism’s income must be greater than its expenditure; it must assimilate, from its environment, more than it gives away; otherwise there is nothing at hand to satisfy the first necessities of progress. So that we are to regard the organism as endowed with a sort of “hunger” which it mechanically seeks to satisfy; are the conditions such that the environment plentifully supplies the ingredients which tend to satisfy this mechanical hunger of the organism then rapid growth is natural, the tendency to variation in all directions is increased, and an ever greater capacity for more intensive assimilation is produced.

Of more importance, according to Darwin, are the internal conditions—more important in that we are accustomed to regard the organism as the source whence other organisms multiply and propagate. Where the conditions are favourable,

this multiplication takes place at a tremendous rate; there are more organisms than the environment can satisfy; a struggle for existence takes place. Here comes in the importance of variation, its advantage or disadvantage. Such organisms can most easily survive as are possessed of some variation of structure that helps them the more easily to adapt themselves to their environment, to profit by their surroundings; these more successful are the most likely to leave a comparatively healthy progeny behind them; thus the struggle for existence continues and the fittest survive. This principle by means of which organisms are enabled to take advantage of, and to preserve, favourable variations, or rather the description of the process by which this more successful adaptation takes place, Darwin calls "natural selection". "It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life."¹⁾

From the nature of the case, natural selection works only for the good of the organism; it cannot modify the structure of one species, without giving it any advantage, for the good of another species. A change in favour of another species without some corresponding advantage to itself would handicap the competitor in the struggle for life. "If it could be proved that any part of the structure of any one species had been formed for the exclusive good of another species, it would annihilate my theory, for such could not have been produced through natural selection. Natural selection tends only to make each organic being as perfect as, or slightly more perfect than, the other inhabitants of the same country with which it comes into competition. And we see that this is the standard of perfection attained under nature."²⁾

We have thus far seen how organic beings under favour-

1) *Origin of Species*, pp. 65, 66. 2) *Ibid.* p. 163.

able conditions tend to vary and to reproduce their kind. Moreover the tendency to variability is in itself hereditary.¹⁾ And “although we have no good evidence of the existence in organic beings of an innate tendency towards progressive development, yet this necessarily follows through the continued action of natural selection. For the best definition which has ever been given of a high standard of organisation is the degree to which the parts have been specialised or differentiated; and natural selection tends towards this end, inasmuch as the parts are thus enabled to perform their functions more efficiently.”²⁾ Now differentiation of structure and specialisation of function imply habit. “If we suppose any habitual action to become inherited—and it can be shown that this does sometimes happen—then the resemblance between what originally was a habit and an instinct becomes so close as not to be distinguished. If Mozart, instead of playing the pianoforte at three years old with wonderfully little practice, had played a tune with no practice at all, he might truly be said to have done so instinctively. But it would be a serious error to suppose that the greater number of instincts have been acquired by habit in one generation, and then transmitted by inheritance to succeeding generations.” Nature does not act by bounds: her work is slow, but sure. However instincts may have been acquired, it will be universally admitted that they are as important as corporeal structures for the welfare of each species, under its present conditions of life. “Under changed conditions of life, it is at least possible that slight modifications of instinct might be profitable to a species; and if it can be shown that instincts do vary ever so little, then I can see no difficulty in natural selection preserving and continually accumulating variations of instinct to any extent that was profitable.” “The instinct of each species is good for itself, but has never so far as we can judge, been produced for the exclusive good of others.”³⁾

But instincts differ among themselves. Two classes may

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 91. ²⁾ p. 176. ³⁾ p. 206.

be broadly distinguished—domestic and natural, the former being far less fixed than the latter. “Under domestication instincts have been acquired, and natural instincts have been lost, partly by habit, and partly by man selecting and accumulating, during successive generations, peculiar mental habits and actions, which at first appeared from what we must in our ignorance call an accident.” It may be well here to pause a little and see what is implied by this new factor. What are we to understand by man’s power of selecting? On the Darwinian theory, how account for any other than natural selection? Is it possible that a natural process of selection can give birth to a power which, at a few removes, takes leave of its parent only to return and control for its own purposes the power whence it sprang? Darwin’s reply is decisive: “in what manner the mental powers were first developed in the lowest organisms is as hopeless an enquiry as how life itself originated. These are problems for the distant future, if they are ever to be solved by man.”¹⁾

Some of the steps in this advance can be noted, and some of the conditions assigned under which the transformation may be supposed to have taken place. “Instinct implies some inherited modification of the brain. Little is known about the functions of the brain, but we can perceive that as the intellectual powers become highly developed, the various parts of the brain must be connected by very intricate channels of the freest intercommunication; and as a consequence, each separate part would perhaps tend to be less well fitted to answer to particular sensations or associations in a definite and inherited—that is, instinctive manner.”²⁾ Or, as Fiske puts it: “As we ascend the animal scale till we come to the higher birds and mammals, we find a very interesting and remarkable change beginning. The general increase of intelligence involves an increasing variety and complication of experiences. The acts which the animal performs in the course of its life become far more numerous, far more various, and far more

¹⁾ *Descent of Man*, p. 66. ²⁾ *Ibid.* p. 68.

complex. They are therefore severally repeated with less frequency in the lifetime of each individual. Consequently the tendency to perform them is not completely organised in the nervous system of the offspring before birth. The short period of ante-natal experience does not afford time enough for the organisation of so many and such complex habitudes and capacities. The process which in the lower animals is completed before birth is in the higher animals left to be completed after birth. When the creature begins its life it is not completely organised. Instead of the power of doing all the things which its parents did, it starts with the power of doing only some few of them; for the rest it has only latent capacities which need to be brought out by its individual experiences after birth. In other words, it begins its separate life not as a matured creature, but as an infant which needs for a time to be watched and helped.”¹⁾

It comes then to this: natural selection, in bringing about a higher form of organisation with less coherent specialisation of function, has been productive of advantages which are however not without their risks and disadvantages. The more varied experience and higher intelligence of parents go along with the helpless infancy of their offspring. Hence for the offspring itself there is the risk of immediate death: but for the parents—possessing in some degree the power and the will to educate—there is an opportunity for casting the young plastic mind into shape, and for drawing forth its possibilities. The prolonged infancy of the offspring of social animals may then be regarded as not altogether a disadvantage: rather must we regard it as that stage in the evolutionary process where natural selection of organic variations gives way to man’s conscious power of selection, and we pass out of the province of “natural science” to enter that of psychology and morals. Only, we must be careful to notice the facts of the case and their implication. What then are the facts? Prolonged infancy is a characteristic of social animals. But

¹⁾ Fiske, *Destiny of Man*, pp. 39—41.

how explain their existence, their living together at all? Evidently from the benefits arising through living in close association—mutual help in seizing prey and warding off the common foe. This grouping together of parents and offspring within the social body has its corresponding mental counterpart in the rise of the parental, filial and social affections. To dogmatise here would be out of place; for “with respect to the origin of the parental and filial affections, which apparently lie at the base of the social instincts, we know not the steps by which they have been gained; but we may infer that it has been to a large extent through natural selection.”¹⁾

For the rest of the chapter we are to regard man as living in society, possessed of different instincts (including among these the social), deriving pleasure from their satisfaction and feeling pain when their action is impeded; endowed too with mental powers, with a capacity of looking before and after, along with a conscious power of “selection for his own good”. Did man fully exercise all the powers with which nature has endowed him, no question would have arisen as to whether man, as distinguished from the lower animals, is a free cause; he would act, whether for his own or for the social good, just as the conditions of the case determined. And whatever the result we could not but admire it; just as “we ought to admire the savage instinctive hatred of the queen-bee, which urges her to destroy the young queens, her daughters, as soon as they are born, or to perish herself in the combat; for undoubtedly this is for the good of the community; and maternal love or maternal hatred, though the latter fortunately is most rare, is all the same to the inexorable principle of natural selection.”²⁾ However there is the fact that “man selects for his own good”; if one asks for something in explanation of this superior power, Darwin’s answer is, “I have nothing to do with the origin of the mental powers, any more than I have with that of life itself”.³⁾

¹⁾ *Descent of Man*, p. 105. ²⁾ *Origin of Species*, p. 164. ³⁾ *Ibid.*
p. 205.

Bearing this in mind, how from these elementary data—of the social instincts, memory, reason &c.—are we to account for the existence of the moral sense? We must pre-suppose a community of social beings: this community is of high intellectual development, and man, from the activity of his mental faculties, cannot avoid reflection; past impressions and images are incessantly and clearly passing through his mind. Now suppose a conflict to take place between the claims of the self-regarding and social instincts. “At the moment of action, man will no doubt be apt to follow the stronger impulse; and though this may occasionally prompt him to the noblest deeds, it will more commonly lead him to gratify his own desires at the expense of other men. But after their gratification, when past and weaker impressions are judged by the ever-enduring social instinct, and by his deep regard for the good opinion of his fellows, retribution will surely come. He will then feel remorse, repentance, regret or shame. He will consequently resolve more or less firmly to act differently for the future; and this is conscience; for conscience looks backwards, and serves as a guide for the future.” “It is obvious that every one may with an easy conscience gratify his own desires, if they do not interfere with his social instincts, that is, with the good of others; but in order to be quite free from self-reproach, or at least of anxiety, it is almost necessary for him to avoid the disapprobation, whether reasonable or not, of his fellowmen. Nor must he break through the fixed habits of his life, especially if these are supported by reason; for if he does he will assuredly feel dissatisfaction. He must likewise avoid the reprobation of the one God or gods in whom, according to his knowledge or superstition, he may believe; but in this case the additional fear of divine punishment often intervenes.”¹⁾

From the preceding it would appear that the dictates of conscience can be followed in two ways—deliberately, and instinctively: on the one hand the good of others may be

1) *Descent of Man*, p. 116.

sought out of regard for the external (physical, political and social) and internal sanctions,—the point of view of the Utilitarians; on the other hand the social instincts may be followed impulsively, through inheritance and without the stimulus of either pleasure or pain, and they lead naturally to the good of others. If it be maintained that such instinctive actions can hardly be accounted moral, the objection would seem to have little weight, seeing that instinct, according to Darwin, has a close connection with habit and that often we are distinctly accountable for the habits we form, and remembering further how "we all feel that an act cannot be considered as perfect, or as performed in the most noble manner, unless it be done impulsively, without deliberation or effort, in the same manner as by a man in whom the requisite qualities are innate."

So that "although man has no special instincts to tell him how to aid his fellowmen, he still has the impulse." And even in seeking how to aid others he is not left without assistance: "with his improved intellectual faculties he would naturally be much guided in this respect by extended sympathy, by reason, and by experience." "To do good in return for evil, to love your enemy, is a height of morality to which it may be doubted whether the social instincts would, by themselves, have ever led us. It is necessary that these instincts, together with sympathy, should have been highly cultivated by the aid of reason, instruction, and the love or fear of God, before any such golden rules would ever be thought of and obeyed. But as love, sympathy and self-command become strengthened by habit, and as the power of reasoning becomes clearer, so that man can value justly the judgment of his fellows, he will feel himself impelled, apart from any transitory pleasure or pain, to certain lines of conduct. He might then declare, I am the supreme judge of my own conduct, and in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity."¹⁾ Instead of selecting his own good he will work for that of others: he will adopt as the end of

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 110.

conduct “the rearing of the greatest number of individuals in full vigour and health, with all their faculties perfect, under the conditions to which they are subjected”; he will give way to his social instincts in cases of conflict, having “no doubt that the welfare and the happiness of the individual usually coincide”. Thus the reproach is removed of laying the foundation of the noblest part of our nature in the base principle of selfishness; unless, indeed, the satisfaction which every animal feels, when it follows its proper instincts, and the dissatisfaction felt when prevented, be called selfish.

CHAPTER III.

HEDONISM WITH EVOLUTION.

The writers whose systems we have to set forth in this chapter—Herbert Spencer and Leslie Stephen—have this in common, that they seek to graft on to the evolution hypothesis the theory that pleasure is the end of action; the struggle is no longer one for existence simply, but for pleasurable or desirable existence. Spencer further differs from Darwin in that his system is an attempt at reconciliation between the two opposed schools of English ethical thought; he is more avowedly Utilitarian, but his Utilitarianism is scientific and not empirical; and he regards the intuitions of the moral sense as trustworthy, but accounts for them—as he accounts for the notion of space—by holding that they are the experience of the race rendered organic through inheritance. On one other point Spencer differs from Darwin, viz., on the relation between Egoism and Altruism; according to Spencer it is not possible to merge Egoism into Altruism. Here Stephen seems to side with Darwin, just as he also does in regarding Sympathy as a primary animal instinct, although the Sympathy treated of by Stephen is for the most part that which exists between persons, arising out of interest in persons as such.

§ 1. Spencer.

In all judgments of conduct Spencer finds a postulate is

involved—one in which pessimists and optimists agree—viz, both their arguments assume it to be self-evident that life is good or bad, according as it does, or does not, bring a surplus of agreeable feeling to self or others or both. The proof is that reversing the application of the words creates absurdities. Every other proposed standard derives its authority from this standard. Whether perfection of nature is the assigned proper aim, or virtuousness of action, or rectitude of motive, the definition of the perfection, the virtue, the rectitude, inevitably brings us down to happiness experienced in some form, at some time, by some person, as the fundamental idea. Pleasure is as much a form of moral intuition as space is a necessary form of intellectual intuition.

“The view for which I contend is, that Morality properly so called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of Moral Science to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognised as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.”¹⁾

Consequently Spencer’s treatise divides itself into two parts,—one descriptive, and the other normative. The descriptive portion deals with conduct regarded from four different points of view—physical, biological, psychological, and socio-logical—and traces the development of conduct from the simplest adjustment of acts to ends, to the more complex, and up to the last stages of development—as displayed by the highest type of being, when he is forced, by increase of numbers, to live more and more in the presence of his fellows, and where conduct simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of

1) *Data of Ethics*, § 21, quoted from letter to Mill.

life in self, in offspring, and in fellowmen. Once the conditions under which this highest life has been brought into being have been stated, the conditions of its increase in length and breadth would seem to be a matter of deduction: by this process the conflicting claims of egoism and altruism are set at rest, and a sketch is given of what conduct ought to be.

A. Turning now to the *descriptive* part, and remembering that conduct is the adjustment of acts to ends, we may state moral conduct in

(1) *physical* terms by saying that it is conduct where this moving equilibrium between organism and environment, this adjustment of acts to ends, reaches completeness, or approaches most nearly to completeness. The same conduct, from the

(2) *biological* standpoint may be defined as a balance of functions. The implication of such a balance is that the several functions in their kinds, amounts, and combinations, are adjusted to the several activities which maintain and constitute complete life. Passing to the feelings which accompany the performance of functions, Spencer maintains that of necessity during the evolution of organic life, pleasures have become the concomitants of normal amounts of functions, while pains positive and negative, have become the concomitants of excesses and defects of functions. And though in every species derangements of these relations are often caused by changes of conditions, they ever re-establish themselves: disappearance of the species being the alternative. From the

(3) *psychological* point of view, we have to consider represented pleasures and pains, sensational and emotional, as constituting deliberate motives—as forming factors in the *conscious* adjustment of acts to ends. Throughout the ascent from low creatures up to man, and from the lowest types of man up to the highest, self-preservation has been increased by the subordination of simple excitations to compound excitations—the subjection of immediate sensations to the ideas of sensations to come—the overruling of presentative feelings by representative feelings, and of representative feelings by re-representative feelings. As life has advanced, the accompanying sen-

tiency has become increasingly ideal; and among feelings produced by the compounding of ideas, the highest, and those which have evolved latest, are the recompounded and doubly ideal. Hence it follows that as guides, the feelings have authorities proportionate to the degrees in which they are removed by their complexity and their ideality from simple sensations and appetites. There arises a certain presumption in favour of a motive which refers to a remote good, in comparison with one which refers to a proximate good. This conscious relinquishment of immediate and special good to gain distant and general good, while it is a cardinal trait of the self-restraint called moral, is also a cardinal trait of self-restraints other than those called moral—the restraints that originate from fear of the visible ruler—political—of the invisible ruler—religious—, and of society at large—social. The idea of authoritativeness has come to be connected with these representative feelings: the implication being that the lower and simpler feelings are without authority. And this idea of authoritativeness is one element in the abstract consciousness of duty. But there is another element—the element of coerciveness; this is simply the feeling of compulsion accompanying the political, religious, and social sanctions transferred by means of association to the moral sanction. “Emerging as the moral motive does but slowly from amidst the political, religious, and social motives, it long participates in that consciousness of subordination to some external agency which is joined with them; and only as it becomes distinct and predominant does it lose this associated consciousness — only then does the feeling of obligation fade.” We cannot help thinking that Spencer’s account of moral obligation would have been more successful had he worked out the thought dropped in § 45: “Moral restraints refer not to the extrinsic effects of actions but to their intrinsic effects . . . Throughout, the moral motive differs from the motives it is associated with in this, that instead of being constituted by representations of incidental, collateral, nonnecessary consequences of acts, it is constituted by representations of consequences which the acts

naturally produce." This necessity of inner experience, this natural sequence of intrinsic effects, in the life of the moral man, is something very different from the illusion of association into which Spencer reduces the feeling of obligation; associations may arise and fade, but surely increase of moralisation implies increased sensitiveness to moral feeling—or evolution has little meaning. Regarded from the

(4) *sociological* standpoint, Ethics becomes nothing else than a definite account of the forms of conduct that are fitted to the associated state, in such wise that the lives of each and all may be the greatest possible, alike in length and breadth. Such "definite account" is not yet at hand, but its leading features may be stated. The fundamental requirement is that the life-sustaining actions of each shall severally bring him the amounts and kinds of advantage naturally achieved by them; and this implies, firstly, that he shall suffer no direct aggressions on his person or property, and secondly, that he shall suffer no indirect aggressions by breach of contract. Observance of these negative conditions to voluntary cooperation having facilitated life to the greatest extent by exchange of services under agreement, life is to be further facilitated by exchange of services beyond agreement; the highest life being reached only when, besides helping to complete one another's lives by specified reciprocities of aid men otherwise help to complete one another's lives.

B. In the *normative* portion of Spencer's work, we find that the end of action is set forth as the greatest surplus of pleasures over pain. "There is a truth also in the doctrine that virtue must be the aim: for this is another form of the doctrine that the aim must be to fulfil the conditions to achievement of the highest life. That the intuitions of a moral faculty should guide our conduct, is a proposition in which a truth is contained: for these intuitions are the slowly organised results of experience received by the race while living in presence of these conditions. And that happiness is the supreme end is beyond question true: for this is the concomitant of that highest life which every theory of moral guidance has distinctly or

vaguely in view.”¹⁾ But what are we to understand by happiness as the end? How can we conceive it to be experienced by innumerable other persons, all differently constituted from ourselves and from one another? Pleasure, we know, is not transferable and cannot be distributed. As in the case of “pleasures of pursuit” it cannot in general be reached by making it the aim; in order to get it we must somehow forget it. Pleasure then rather consists in or follows upon the due exercise of the various functions of the organism. This exercise requires the presence of certain conditions, on the existence of a structure which is called into play, and on the condition of that structure as fitting or unfitting it to its environment. But if there are any conditions without fulfilment of which happiness cannot be compassed, then the first step must be to ascertain these conditions with a view to fulfilling them; and to admit this is to admit that not happiness itself must be the end, but fulfilment of the conditions to its attainment must be the immediate end. Now certain conditions to the achievement of happiness have already been partially, if not wholly ascertained; and if so, our first business should be to look for them. Having found them, our rational course is to bring existing intelligence to bear on these products of past intelligence, with the expectation that it will verify the substance of them while possibly correcting the form. But to suppose that no regulative principles for the conduct of associated human beings have thus far been established, and that they are now to be established *de novo*, is to suppose that man as he is differs from man as he was in an incredible degree. Thus we are again brought back to experience: and in this matter as in others experience gives no direct “yes” or “no” in answer to our enquiries. Indeed it lands us in difficulties. For

1^o, “Ethics has to recognise the truth, recognised in unethical thought, that egoism comes before altruism. Any arrangements which in a considerable degree prevent superiority from profiting by the rewards of superiority, or shield in-

¹⁾ *Ibid.* § 62.

feriority, from the evils it entails—any arrangements which tend to make it as well to be inferior as to be superior, are arrangements diametrically opposed to the progress of organisation and the reaching of a higher life. But to say that each individual shall reap the benefits brought to him by his own powers, inherited and acquired, is to enunciate egoism as an ultimate principle of conduct." Hence one vague rule:—"the pursuit of individual happiness within those limits prescribed by social conditions, is the first requisite to the attainment of the greatest general happiness."¹⁾ But

20, "in the course of evolution from first to last there has been sacrifice involving a loss of bodily substance. . . Self-sacrifice, then, is no less primordial than self-preservation. Being in its simple physical form absolutely necessary for the continuance of life from the beginning; and being extended under its automatic form, as indispensable to maintenance of race in types considerably advanced; and being developed to its semi-conscious and conscious forms along with the continued and complicated attendance by which the offspring of superior creatures are brought to maturity; altruism has been evolving simultaneously with egoism. The same superiorities which have enabled the individual to preserve itself better, have enabled it better to preserve the individuals derived from it; and each higher species, using its improved faculties for egoistic benefit, has spread in proportion as it has used them secondarily for altruistic benefit."²⁾ But neither principle must be pushed to an extreme: the need for a compromise is thus made conspicuous.

"Our conclusion must be that general happiness is to be achieved mainly through the adequate pursuit of their own happiness by individuals; while, reciprocally, the happinesses of individuals are to be achieved in part by their pursuit of the general happiness."³⁾ The conditions for the carrying out of this reciprocity in conduct are not wanting: for the whole tendency of evolution is, on its social side, towards the equal

¹⁾ Ibid. § 69. ²⁾ Ibid. § 65. ³⁾ Ibid. § 91.

distribution of the conditions under which happiness may be pursued—and this is nothing but a roundabout insistence on equity; and as far as concerns the individual he is to judge between his own happiness and that of others as an impartial spectator would do—equity is again the sole content of the principles of conduct. So that, in Spencer's system, the ideal turns out to be Justice, quantitatively determined.

§ 2. Leslie Stephen.

Stephen's pet aversion is metaphysics. His "*Science of Ethics*" is an attempt to establish the science on an empirical basis. Abandoning the enquiry into the origin of this or that faculty he takes the case as it stands, formulates its implications, and points out in what direction the line of progress lies and how most smoothly it can be traversed. Two characteristics he insists on: (a) every state of desire is marked by feeling, and it is this state of feeling that determines conduct; (b) man lives in society; man independent of society is a nonentity; hence the need of the science of sociology, which however as yet "consists of nothing more than a collection of unverified guesses and vague generalities, disguised under a more or less pretentious apparatus of quasi-scientific terminology."¹⁾ Stephen is further interesting as being one of the most candid exponents of the biological view of ethics: he is not blind to its shortcomings, and in transcending his system he approaches very near to the phase of ethical thought represented by the late Prof. Green.

Looking at society as we find it we observe that there are in existence a set of rules which, as a matter of fact, is respected in the given society. This set of rules Stephen calls the moral code; and the very fact of their being respected so far determines the ordinary approvals and disapprovals as to be an effective force in governing conduct. Accordingly ethical speculation must be implicated in psychological and sociological enquiries: in the former we have mainly to do with emotion, in the latter with the activity of reason.

(a) *Feeling and Emotion.* Conduct is determined by feeling;

¹⁾ *Science of Ethics*, pp. 10, 11.

we fly from pain; we seek pleasure; life is a continuous struggle to minimise suffering and to lay a firm grasp upon happiness. "Good" means everything which favours happiness, and "bad" everything which is conducive to misery: nor can any other intelligible meaning be assigned to the words. Happiness guides us when we are eating our dinners, or studying metaphysics, or feeding the hungry. It must be equally good for saints, martyrs, heroes, cowards, debauchees, ascetics, mystics, cynics, misers, prodigals, men, women, and babes in arms. Pain and pleasure are, then, the determining causes of action. It may even be said that they are the sole and ultimate causes. They are the sole causes in this sense, that where two courses of conduct are otherwise possible, and the choice of one depends upon the agent's own decision, his will is always determined by the actual painfulness or pleasure-ableness of the choice at the moment of choosing, and that there is no different kind of motive. They are ultimate in this sense, that it is impossible to analyse pain and pleasure into any simpler elements. It may happen, but it may also not happen, that the passions may be so regulated that the conduct dictated by our immediate feelings may coincide with that which would be dictated by a judgment of our total happiness. And this leads us to our next problem. We can only be affected by the prospect of the future in so far as we are reasoning beings. We must, therefore, consider in what sense the mere blind action of immediate feeling is governed and regulated by the reason.

(b) *Reason as determining conduct.* Reason, whatever its nature, is the faculty which enables us to act with a view to the distant and the future. Consequently, in so far as man is reasonable, he is under the influence of motives which would not otherwise be operative. Now man's reasonable interests may in the main be classified into (1) those which have regard to his own future pleasures and pains, and (2) those which have regard to the condition of the social organism of which he forms a part. In relation to the former man may be regarded as a hierarchy of numerous and conflicting passions, each of

which has ends of its own, and each of which, separately considered, would give a different law of conduct; it is the reason that brings the whole conduct into harmony and unity; it forbids us to pursue trifling objects at the expence of important; for instead of allowing each instinct to operate exclusively in turn, it subjects each to the implicit and explicit control of the others. But reason further enables us after a time to judge even of our own character as a whole, to rehearse not only particular acts but moods, and so become spectators of ourselves, and regard our own feelings with disgust or complacency; every such reflection tends to modify future action by revealing to us more distinctly its social consequences, and by investing it with certain associations of approval or disapproval. Thus the function of reason is twofold—it regulates the self-regarding impulses, and the relation of the individual to society. In cases of conflict between feelings inclining now towards the individual's welfare, now towards that of society, who is to decide? what is the criterion by which we can judge of feelings? what has evolution to say to the matter? So far as adaptation has taken place the line of progress has been "useful" in the sense of pleasure-giving; so far as the type thus formed represents a favourable adjustment of organism to conditions, the result is "useful" in the sense of life-preserving: and a fundamental doctrine from the evolutionist point of view is that pleasure-giving actions must likewise be self-preserving. And this, thinks Stephen, we may certainly say, that there is as close a connection between health and happiness as between disease and misery, and that the anomalies which present themselves in attempting to generalise this theory might be cleared up by a more accurate investigation. Races survive in virtue of this correlation between pleasure-giving and life-preserving actions. But the quality which makes a race survive may not always be a source of advantage to every individual, nor even, if we look closer, to the average individual. Since the race has no existence apart from the individual, qualities essential to the existence of each unit are of course essential to the existence of the whole. But the converse pro-

position does not hold. Hence the necessity of considering the relation of the race to the individual.

Every man is both an individual and a social product, and every instinct both social and self-regarding. The individual is the product of the race; and the race the sum of the individuals. Our ancestors have created a new world for us; and each individual, in whatever department he labours, assumes that others are labouring in tacit or express cooperation. Thus society is a vast organisation, and it exists as it exists in virtue of this organisation, which is as real as the organisation of any material instrument, though it depends upon habits and instincts instead of arrangements of tangible and visible objects; for instance, in the social organisation we find political, ecclesiastical, and industrial organs, growing more and more distinct and more interdependent as society advances. But there is another form of association, viz., the family, which is frequently mentioned as though it were a coordinate group alongside of the state, the church, and industrial bodies. This mode of speech leads to confusion. The sentiment of loyalty to a state, *e.g.*, is clearly a derivative sentiment; it is the product of many instincts or modes of feeling, each of which has its own laws, independently of this special application. The family, on the contrary, depends at once upon the most primitive instincts of our nature, which are the direct products of our organic constitution. The family tie is more or less the ground of every other, an antecedent assumption in all human society, and therefore not explicable as a product of other modes of association. Clearly then, we must regard the family as the social unit. For a great part of every one's life the family is the whole world. It is the true school of morality. Family affections are both the type and the root of all truly altruistic feeling: here we have the raw material of the moral sense, which will afterwards be developed and regulated by our position in the whole social organism. What then are the constituents of this raw material, found in the family, and afterwards built up into the whole structure of society? To answer this question is to give

The Contents of the Moral Law. The law of nature has

but one precept, "Be strong". This law has two main branches "be prudent", and "be virtuous", corresponding to the distinction of the qualities which are primarily useful to the individual and those which are primarily useful to the society—utility meaning fitness for the conditions of life. The law of prudence corresponds rather to a precedent condition of morality than to morality itself. Morality proper arises with the regulation alike of the passions which have a direct bearing upon the individual life and those which have a direct bearing upon the social bond; whence the virtues of temperance and chastity. Further, the individual, so far as reasonable, must avoid error on his own account and must avoid the propagation of error for the welfare of the society, whence the virtues of wisdom and trustworthiness. And, finally, since the social union implies a direct interest of the individual in the welfare of the society, we have the directly social virtues, which imply at once benevolence and justice, according as we attend to the motive or to the regulated action of the motives. These classes of excellence, which by their mode of development are necessarily reconcileable and mutually implicatory of each other, seem to constitute all that is meant by the general moral law, though admitting, of course, an indefinite variety of special application. Briefly then morality is a statement of the conditions of social welfare; and morality, as distinguished from prudence, refers to those conditions which imply a direct action upon the social union.

But how impress virtue on the individual? Nature helps us a long way, for, to put it briefly, we cannot help being altruistic. The world is interesting to me so far as it is the dwelling-place of myself and of beings analogous to myself, moved by passions like my own. And it is a part of my nature to be sympathetic. To be reasonable, I must be sympathetic; to be thoroughly and systematically selfish, I must be an idiot. There is no more reason for denying that we may receive pleasure from the pleasure of another man than for doubting that we may receive it from the combustion of coal. Sympathy is not an additional instinct, a faculty which is added when the mind has reached a certain stage of development, a mere incident

of intellectual growth, but something implied from the first in the very structure of knowledge; it is a natural and fundamental fact. Seeing that sympathy depends largely upon our relation to others, we may take it for a fact that our sympathetic feelings may often lead to altruistic, nay even, self-sacrificing conduct. But altruism or benevolence is not yet virtue: this latter rather implies the elaboration and regulation of the sympathetic character which takes place through the social factor. In the moral man this regard for society is free from all external compulsion: his motives are intrinsic: for him the form of the moral law is not "do this", but "be this". This recognition of the law as intrinsically binding is, on every hypothesis, the crown and final outcome of the moralised character. The moral law being conformity to the conditions of social welfare, conscience is the name of the intrinsic motives to such conformity. It is the utterance of the public spirit of the race, ordering us to obey the primary conditions of its welfare, and it acts not the less forcibly though we may not understand the source of its authority or the end at which it is aiming. *E.g.* if you ask, "why is maternal love virtue?" the answer from one point of view is, "because it is essential to social virtue." Looking at the case from the opposite side, we must invert the order of deduction: the mother loves because she is so constituted as to be capable of loving, and because she is part of a society in which the instinct is stimulated and fostered: for her the love is its own justification, she has the sentiment, and need look no further.

The maternal instincts, however, and their accompanying satisfaction are exceptionally strong; we are still at a loss to discover an all-sufficient reason for virtuous conduct on the part of an individual not completely moralised. "The attempt to establish an absolute coincidence between virtue and happiness is in ethics what the attempting to square the circle and to discover perpetual motion are in geometry and mechanics. For my part, I accept the altruist theory, and I accept what I hold to be its legitimate and inseparable conclusion—the conclusion, *viz.*, that the path of duty does not coincide with

the path of happiness.”¹⁾ But there is no need to despair. If a man has the normal constitution, he will presumably be the happier for a moral development, as, if he has the normal intellect, he will derive the normal benefits from education, or, if he has a normal stomach, he will derive the normal benefits from observance of sanitary rules. It is hopeless to produce a balance-sheet of pains and pleasure which would prove that the virtuous man gets a greater sum of pleasant emotions or a sum of emotions superior in quality; but it may be proved that a man gains by growing as much as it is in him to grow, and that this necessarily involves moral growth. Still it is possible to make a man less fitted for enjoyment under normal circumstances by trying to put too high a polish upon his moral nature, as it is possible to achieve the same result by cultivating tastes for art or intellectual study in those who have no natural aptitude. But whatever doubts we may have as to the possibility of making any given person moral, and of contributing to his personal happiness by doing so, we can have no scruples in making him as moral as we can. For we cannot know till we have tried what capabilities of development there may be in him, and the general principle that moral development involves good to him and still more to the society, is sufficiently demonstrated to compel us to do what we can. So that “I take for granted that as a rule it is prudent to be moral, and still more unequivocally that it is prudent to encourage the morality of our neighbours.”²⁾ To make our neighbours really moral we must stimulate their intrinsic motives to action; and this must be in all cases the product of the pressure put upon them in gradually imbibing the principles developed by the social factor. “This is recognised in the statement that a religion is always more than a morality. It is not a mere statement that certain rules of conduct are desirable, but it is such an embodiment of some theory of the universe as may impress the imagination and govern the emotions.”³⁾ But are we not thus, after all, landed in a “metaphysic” of ethics?

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 431.

²⁾ Ibid. p. 432.

³⁾ Ibid. p. 457.

CHAPTER IV.

REVIEW AND CRITICISM.

Among moralists there is general agreement as to what is the right in any particular case; and in daily life there is seldom any difficulty on this point. But the case is different when we turn to the motive to right conduct. We can't help believing what we see to be true; but we can refrain from doing what we see to be right. The fact of irrational impulse leading to irrational conduct remains whatever theory of ethics we adopt. Sidgwick distinguishes three kinds of conduct:—

- a. *non-rational*; *e.g.* as in instinctive action, where impulses to action seem to take effect "instinctively" without definite consciousness of end or means.
- b. *irrational*;—the result of irrational desires, impelling us to volitions opposed to our deliberate judgments.
- c. *rational*. Judgments relating to rational conduct contain the notion "ought" or "right", a notion essentially different from all notions represented by empirical facts: it is fundamental, ultimate, and unanalyseable. The judgment is objective; what I judge "right" or "ought to be" must, unless I am in error, be thought to be so by all rational beings who judge truly of the matter. And along with the cognition of the rightness of the action is given an impulse or motive to action, though this is only one motive among others which are liable to conflict with it, and is not always a predominant motive.

Accordingly the answer to the question "why should I do what I see to be right" varies with the emotional characteristics of different minds; *e.g.* in the mind of a rational Egoist the ruling impulse is generally what Butler and Hutcheson call a "calm" or "cool" self-love: whereas in the man who takes universal happiness as the end and standard of right conduct, the desire to do what is judged to be reasonable as such is commonly blended in varying degrees with sympathy and philanthropic enthusiasm. Again, if one conceives the dictating Reason—whatever its dictates may be—as external to

oneself, the cognition of rightness is accompanied by a sentiment of Reverence for Authority; which may by some be conceived impersonally, but is more commonly regarded as the authority of a supreme Person, so that the sentiment blends with the affections normally excited by persons in different relations, and becomes Religious. While again, if we identify Reason and Self, Reverence for Authority blends with Self-respect; and again, the antithetical and even more powerful sentiment of Freedom is called in, if we consider the rational Self as liable to be enslaved by the usurping force of sensual impulses. Quite different again are the emotions of Aspiration or Admiration aroused by the conception of Virtue as an ideal of Moral Perfection or Beauty. Other phases of emotion might be mentioned, all having with these the common characteristic that they are inseparable from an apparent cognition,—implicit or explicit, direct or indirect,—of *rightness* in the conduct to which they prompt.¹⁾

Evidently then Ethics has to do with the cognitions which these various emotions, with their common characteristic of “rightness”, accompany. Now Reason, whether applied to the facts of nature or of conduct, seeks after unity; is there any unity underlying the various cognitions of right? In the main two “ends” have been regarded as worthy objects of pursuit: at one time Happiness, at another Perfection has held sway. The writers hitherto dealt with have adopted Happiness as the end, and by happiness they mean pleasure. Pleasure is a kind of feeling which stimulates the will to actions tending to sustain or produce it; Pain, to actions tending to remove or avert it. Feeling in itself is non-moral; it only becomes the object of moral judgment when it accompanies a volition. The volitional stimulus to the attainment of pleasure is Desire, to the avoidance of pain, Aversion. The question we have to decide, in criticising the Utilitarian doctrine as set forth by Mill, is whether there are no desires and aversions which have not pleasures and pains for their objects. But we must first of all distinguish

¹⁾ Methods of Ethics (3⁰ ed.), pp. 39, 40.

between prospective and resultant pleasure. Do I eat because I am hungry, then the end is the satisfaction of hunger, and the satisfaction of any instinct brings with it resultant pleasure; do I eat for the sake of the pleasure of eating, then to attain pleasure is my motive, and the pleasure attained is the gourmand's. In the former case a want, the feeling of hunger, is the direct impulse to the eating of food; in the latter case the pleasure expected is the object of a secondary desire. And it would seem as if the question is narrowed down to this—whether, in the sphere of moral conduct, *all* desires are *secondary* desires for pleasure?

On the face of it this looks absurd; nay more, reflection shows us that as a rule secondary desires are just those which, along with irrational desires, are universally condemned. Life is not a state but an activity, and the pleasures with which it abounds, though intertwined with, are consequent upon action, and not its object; to get these pleasures one often must forget them. The student desires knowledge with a view to getting a firmer grasp of things, not primarily for any pleasures of thought. The artist finds satisfaction in *producing* works of art—he is only secondarily concerned with any pleasure they may subsequently afford. The impulse to benevolent affections is essentially a desire to do good to others for the sake of others: true, the flow of love or kindly feeling is itself highly pleasurable and might cause pain if the act of benevolence were withheld; but the cultivation of this affection for the sake of its sympathetic pleasures would at once be condemned as egoistic and mean. "So far, then, from our conscious active impulses being always directed towards the attainment of pleasure or avoidance of pain for ourselves, it would seem that we find everywhere in consciousness extra-regarding impulses, directed towards something that is not pleasure, nor relief from pain; and, in fact, that a most important part of our pleasure depends upon the existence of such impulses."¹⁾

We may take it then that there exists the phenomenon

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1) *Ibid.* pp. 50, 51.

of strictly disinterested impulse. Mill does not deny this: he only asserts that it has become disinterested owing to well-known psychological laws. Without however prejudicing the question of the *validity* of the moral sentiments with a theory of their *origin*, we may perhaps assert that the Utilitarian, more so than others, must assume this phenomenon of disinterestedness: for he is in the curious position of having the end of conduct determined by reason irrespectively of his own feeling in the matter. Mill, at any rate, hardly attempts to arrive at the Utilitarian end by any empirical induction from experience. And in fact the most renowned living representative of Utilitarianism—Sidgwick—maintains that the end cannot be so arrived at;¹⁾ he establishes it on grounds of Reason, from self-evident principles intuitively known to be valid. The chain of reasoning is as follows:—the satisfaction of any desire is *pro tanto* good; and an equal regard for all the moments of our conscious experience—so far, at least, as the mere difference of their position in time is concerned—is an essential characteristic of rational conduct. Reason accordingly establishes the law of Prudence. None the less are we forced to admit the universal validity of the principle of Benevolence; “by considering the relation of the integrant parts to the whole and to each other, I obtain the self-evident principle that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may so say) of the Universe, than the good of any other.” “As rational beings we are bound to aim at good generally, not merely at this or that part of it.”²⁾ Then interpreting the good as “desirable consciousness”—as happiness or pleasure—he arrives at the end, *viz.*, “desirable consciousness or feeling for the innumerable multitude of living beings, present and to come, an End that satisfies our imagination by its vastness, and sustains our resolution by its comparative security.”³⁾ He allows “that the pursuit of ideal objects such as Truth, Freedom, Beauty, &c., *for their own sakes*, is indirectly and secondarily, though not primarily and

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 93.

²⁾ *Ibid.* p. 381.

³⁾ *Ibid.* p. 401.

absolutely rational; on account not only of the happiness that will result from their attainment, but also of that which springs from their disinterested pursuit.”¹⁾ But what if one denies the advisability of pursuing Truth, Freedom, Beauty *for their own sakes*? Just as material or other objects are nothing considered apart from some relation to consciousness, so these objective relations are nothing when distinguished from the consciousness accompanying and resulting from them, or, more correctly, from the consciousness that makes them objective relations at all.

It would seem as if Sidgwick, over-anxious to escape the circle in which he finds ancient Greek philosophy moving, had, in this “desirable consciousness or feeling for the innumerable multitude of living beings present and to come”, set up as abstract a conception as was ever proposed for poor human nature to follow. The conception presupposes the commensurability of pleasures and pains, a condition without which the hedonistic calculus prior to the determination of action would be impossible. It sets up as final the judgment of the sentient *individual* as to the question how far each element of feeling has the quality of ultimate, that is, *universal* Good.²⁾ The necessary reference to the innumerable multitude of living beings present and to come would seem to make it an impossible conception—not to speak of additional difficulties if we admit, as perhaps we should, that pleasures differ not only in quantity but also in quality, according to the nature of the conditions under which they arise. None is more alive to the difficulties of the position than Sidgwick himself. For, “passing over the uncertainties involved in hedonistic comparison generally, let us suppose that the quantum of happiness that will result from the establishment of any plan of behaviour among human beings can be ascertained with sufficient exactness for practical purposes; and that even when the plan is as yet constructed in imagination alone. It still has to be asked, what is the nature of the human being for whom we

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 403. ²⁾ Ibid. p. 396.

are to construct this hypothetical scheme of conduct? For humanity is not something that exhibits the same properties always and everywhere: whether we consider the intellect of man or his feelings, or his physical condition and circumstances, we find them so different in different ages and countries, that it seems *prima facie* absurd to lay down a set of ideal Utilitarian rules for mankind generally.”¹⁾ It seems to us that it is just here that Sidgwick’s system comes to grief: the end, discovered by reason and deliberately adopted by an act of will, turns out to be a maximum of desirable consciousness; in the analysis more stress is laid on the *desirable* than on the *conscious* element of the end; it is made to consist in feeling pure and simple—an abstraction—and not in self-consciousness in all its phases. This restriction of the content of the end to feeling is the more remarkable when we remember that the object of moral *judgment* is admitted to be not consequences of actions as such, but more strictly “the volitions themselves accompanied with intention—whether the intended consequences be external, or some effects produced on the agent’s own feelings or character.”²⁾ And when the question is raised as to the value of “formally” right conduct—where the agent in willing is moved by pure desire to fulfil duty or chooses duty for duty’s sake—as compared with “materially” right conduct—where the agent intends the right particular effects, we are told that “the moral sense of mankind would, under ordinary circumstances, regard the Subjective rightness of an action as generally more important than the Objective,”³⁾ owing to the superior worth of right character or disposition. Of course we are aware that Utilitarians have been most eloquent in their praise of good dispositions as being the most likely means to bring about maximum happiness, but again dispositions are nothing apart from the persons whose dispositions they are, and persons, moral beings, are something more than the transient state of pleasurable feeling insisted upon in the sensationalist philosophy.

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 462, 3. ²⁾ *Ibid.* p. 57, 8. ³⁾ *Ibid.* p. 204, 5.

So that when the time arrives for decision upon a course of action, the ordinary man, if not the Utilitarian philosopher, will seek a rougher and a readier method than that afforded by the hedonistic calculus. He will seek his good, as Aristotle said he ought to, in the *exercise* of virtue: he will attain his end, in whatever small degree, in the cognition of Truth, in the contemplation of Beauty, in Freedom of action. It will not matter to him if he is told he is moving in a circle. "Granting it to be a circle, it may be none the worse for that. No one complains of the guide who takes him up the mountain that he takes him back to the starting-point. The journey may have been of value, though he returns at the end of it to the same place. As a matter of fact, the same traveller never does return to the same place. He is a different man when he comes back, and the home he comes back to is a different place."¹⁾ So the virtuous man's act has been one step further in self-realisation: he is in possession of a permanent good which does not pass away with a momentary feeling in consciousness. Not that pleasure can or need be renounced altogether. "It is always a part of the desired or willed object. But this pleasure is not prospective pleasure: nor is it the cause of the desire; nor is it independent of or separable from the rest of the object. Its presence means that the object is an object of *desire* or *will*. And the pleasure is always the pleasure of the action itself. If, then, it is asked whether we desire pleasure or certain objects, the most natural answer is that we desire sometimes one and sometimes the other, according to whichever is more prominent in our minds. Moreover, the pleasure is not pleasure in general, but is my own pleasure, but it does not for that reason make my act a selfish act, any more than it is selfish of me to take my fair share of profits in a partnership, or in general to make the best of myself." "Without the pleasure the standard of action would be something divorced from our experience. And if it is an abstraction to consider pleasure apart from the

¹⁾ Muirhead, Elements of Ethics, p. 173.

act, it is equally an abstraction to regard the act without its pleasure.”¹⁾

Turning now to the evolutionist writers, we find it the less necessary to refer to their merits seeing that the luminous idea of differentiation and integration is likely to remain for a long time to come the controlling idea in methodical investigation. We have seen how Darwin pursued this method and with what success. He endeavoured to show how along with differentiation and organisation in the race there grew up in the individual a subjective reflection of the same fact, a feeling of sympathy with the feelings of others; and how in this way we are to account for the growth of moral sentiments. It may be said in general that Darwin’s only fault was that he considered a *description* of the facts as they appeared to an onlooker to be a sufficient *explanation* of these facts; but, in reality, the struggle for survival represents not the cause of growth but its method.

Spencer’s method is still that of the onlooker; so much so indeed that it is difficult at times to draw the line that separates simple mechanical adaptation to environment from truly moral action. This blending of the non-moral with the moral is no doubt a part of his plan, but the result is unsatisfactory in that the facts that come under consideration are only the external effects of actions, not actions as a whole proceeding from characters conscious of the end aimed at. His morality may be summed up in the formula “Do this”; it has not attained to the true character expressed in “Be this”.

This transition from a “Do this” to a “Be this” we find in Stephen; “that man is meritorious who does from an intrinsic motive what another man will do only from an extrinsic motive”,²⁾ who regards the moral law as the “objective” law of his conduct, and not as the “subjective” law or “reason”. The recognition of that law as objective is held to be, on every hypothesis, the crown and final outcome of the moralised

¹⁾ Alexander, Moral Order and Progress, pp. 223, 211. ²⁾ Science of Ethics, p. 267.

character. But when he sets out to explain this objective conduct of the moral man, Stephen has recourse to the social organism with its various functions as they are exercised in contemporary civilised communities. The individual is shown to be a member of different organisations—the family, the state, the church; it is from his relations to them that his character is what it is. But from the persistent emphasis laid on these objective conditions, and owing to morality being regarded as consisting of actions tending to further the health of the social organism, the individual tends more and more to retire into the background, and society proceeds on its course, unconscious of its movement or its destiny. For assuredly if there are “no persons without society”, it is quite as true that there is “no society without persons”, and more so; for it is the individuals that make society what it is, and to introduce the conception “society”, in order to explain why the individual is what he is, thus turns out to be an explanation of the *obscurum per obscurius*.

Further, it has to be remarked that both Spencer and Stephen have encumbered their theory with hedonistic presumptions. For them the end is not simply Existence—as on the theory of evolution we might expect—but existence qualified by pleasurable feeling *i.e.* Welfare, Happiness, or Health of the social organism. Now, before this additional quality can be added on to Existence as the end of evolution two points have to be made out, *viz* (a) that life-preserving actions are pleasure-giving; and (b) that continuous differentiation and integration of organic functions implies an increased amount of happiness. In support of these positions Spencer maintains that “those races of beings only can have survived in which, *on the average*, agreeable or desired feelings went along with activities conducive to the maintenance of life, while disagreeable and habitually-avoided feelings went along with activities directly or indirectly destructive of life;”¹⁾ and Stephen contents himself with saying that life-preserving and pleasure-

1) *Data of Ethics*, § 33.

giving actions “approximately coincide”; but anything like a proof of optimism is not attempted—in spite of there being pessimistic views of life abroad. And again, it is doubtful whether much is gained by setting up the happiness of society as the end, for this cannot mean the happiness of the social organism, but is only a concise formula for the aggregate happinesses of the individuals composing it, and is as such subject to the same criticisms as apply to the Utilitarian end. So that, briefly, “the doctrine of evolution itself, when applied to empirical morality, only widens our view of the old landscape—does not enable us to pass from ‘is’ to ‘ought’, or from efficient to final cause, any more than the telescope can point beyond the sphere of spatial quantity.”¹⁾ The truths established by evolution may be of use in restraining the ardour and tempering the enthusiasm of those who think they have a panacea for all the ills of life, provided they once had a free hand to apply it; its insistence on heredity and environment as all-important factors in the constitution of individual and social life helps to show that we are still at a distance from that “far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves”. But evolution cannot solve the problems it has raised. “What is required to complete the evolutionist theory is (1) once and for all to renounce Hedonism and all its works; (2) to add to its empirical demonstration that the individual is essentially social a teleological demonstration that his good is essentially a common good.”²⁾

CHAPTER V.

RIGHT CHARACTER.

“In the recognition of conduct as ‘right’ is involved an authoritative prescription to do it: but when we have judged conduct to be good, it is not yet clear that we ought to prefer

¹⁾ Sorley, *Ethics of Naturalism*, p. 139. ²⁾ Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, p. 145.

this kind of good to all other good things. In short, the notion of 'rightness' is essentially positive, and that of 'goodness' admits of degrees."¹⁾ Taking advantage of this distinction, we propose in this chapter to set forth and characterise Martineau's system—reserving for the next Green's theory of the Good.

As was the case with the writers whose systems have been discussed, so does Martineau claim to rest his system on a psychological basis. But a psychological theory of ethics, so long as it remains at its own centre—individual life—lies under all the disabilities to which every system of Monism is exposed. And Martineau is deeply persuaded that no monistic scheme, whether its starting-point be Self, or Nature, or God, can ever interpret, without distorting or expunging, the facts on which our nature and life are built. He has devoted many pages of his treatise to show that a system proceeding from a naturalistic or materialistic standpoint to deduce the moral from the non-moral either reads into the non-moral a meaning which is not there, or fails to note the characteristically moral where it exists. Accordingly taking his stand on self-consciousness as declaring truths *notiora nobis* he seeks to discover their meaning and to set forth their implications.

Consciousness would seem to spend itself in two main directions:

1⁰, attention to the facts of nature, observation of its order, perception of its laws, may lead to a theory of knowledge; but

2⁰, as persons we stand in relation to other persons—our fellowmen—and to something higher than we, but still a person, viz, God.

The fields are fairly distinct: for is it not true that the sense of shame is different from the sound of thunder, and the comparison of triangles unlike the aspiration of prayer? The activity of consciousness in the pursuit of knowledge may be characterised as *Perception*, in the establishment of a system

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1) *Methods of Ethics*, p. 103.

of morals, *Conscience*. Apart from any metaphysical assumptions, both may be said to find the law, but not to make it; they reveal, but do not frame it. Each is to be dictator *in its own sphere*—perception, among the objects of sense,—conscience, as to the conditions of duty. The objects of sense are arranged according to the organs of sense, not according to any inner principle; but “there are no bones, or muscles, or feathers appropriated to the exclusive use of self-love; no additional eye or limb set apart for the service of benevolence; no judicial wig adhering to the head that owns a conscience; so that in this field, *i.e.* through the whole scene of the moral phenomena, no help can be had from the zoological record.”¹⁾ But just as in the field of perception, *self*-knowledge is the secondary accompaniment of *other* knowledge: inseparable indeed from all our mental action, but not the end on which it is directed; proceeding *pari passu* with our advance among the objects and changes of the universe, but rather as the collateral shadow than as the main figure in the movement; so conscience first finds its exercise among personal relations and then becomes aware of itself. The individual is, in fact, the later product; and disengages himself into his independent wholeness as the ripest fruit of a collective development. Humanity first, as a plural organism; and then personality, in its singular force;—that is the order of Nature and Providence. But once introspection can proceed so far as to be able to distinguish between the self and the contents due to its activity, a theory of knowledge is possible; in like manner once the personality is there, we are in a position to establish critically a theory of morals. But criticism, like charity, begins at home. Accordingly Martineau’s method is to invite the conscience itself to declare its own psychology.

Moral Judgment. The one great fact we have here to recognise is that distinctively as men we have an irresistible tendency to *approve* and *disapprove*, to pass judgments of right and wrong. What are the objects on which our moral

¹⁾ *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. II, p. 367.

judgment directs itself? Self-evidently, it is persons exclusively, and not things, that we approve or condemn. "If the rock is *stern*, if the stream is *joyous*, if the star is *mild*, it is because the inner heart of nature is felt to speak through them, and hold communion with us; and only in proportion as we lift the external world into this *personal* element, can such language appear justified. Benefit and mischief are in themselves wholly characterless; and we neither applaud the gold mine, nor blame the destructive storm." It follows, that what we judge is always the *inner spring* of an action, as distinguished from its outward operation. For whatever else may be implied in its being a personal phenomenon, this at least is involved, that it is issued by the mind, and has its dynamic source there. Hindrance, by simply stopping execution does not alter the character of intention; "else would guilt return to innocence by being frustrated, and goodness go for nothing when it strives in vain." The inner spring of action is not apprehensible by any external observation, but can be known, in the first instance, only by internal self-consciousness. Of other men's actions the visible part, which follows on the mental antecedents, is the first element that comes before our view; all that precedes is beyond the reach of eye and ear, and is read off only by inference from the external sign. The sign would be unmeaning to us, were not the thing signified already familiar to us by our own inner experience. "Without susceptibility to love, how stupidly should we stare at the kiss of the mother to the child! without openness to sorrow, at the prostrate and sobbing mourner! without sense of religion, at the clasped hands of prayer!" This however is not all. The remark is as old as the time of Socrates, that the aptitudes of spontaneous genius do not constitute *wisdom*; and it is another side of the same truth, that the impulses of spontaneous action do not constitute *character*. We never judge our *spontaneities*, but only our *volitions*. In the spontaneous state, a single impulse is present; in the voluntary not less than two. All judgment is relative, and predicates distinction; and our mind could attach no attribute to a spring of action, did

we not see it side by side with something dissimilar; which is nothing else than some possible substitute, some other spring of action, displaying the complementary colours to the moral eye. Endeavour to do away with this duality; thin off this second object till it melts in the surrounding field; still there remains this surrounding field itself; and you at least have before you, as the condition of judgment, your mind *with* the given spring of action and your mind *without it*: the positive to compare with the negative, the active with the passive, living force with abstinent inertia. This plurality of simultaneous tendencies, however, would still present no case for moral judgment, were it not also felt to be a plurality of simultaneous possibilities; *i.e.* the impulses must be simultaneous *inter se*, and they must both be possibilities *to us*. So then we come to the conclusion that the objects of our moral judgment are, originally, our own inner principles of self-conscious action, as freely preferred or excluded by our will. Our next object will be to enumerate these springs of action, first in psychological, and then in their moral, order.

(a) *Springs of Action: Psychological Order.*

Martineau begins by distinguishing between two sets of impelling principles; viz, those which urge man, in the way of unreflecting instinct, to appropriate objects or natural expression—*Primary* springs of action; and those which supervene upon self-knowledge and experience, and in which the pre-conception is present of an end gratifying to some recognised feeling—*Secondary* springs of action. This too is the order of their derivation: The secondary feelings are the primary over again, metamorphosed by the operation of self-consciousness.

Of the *primary* springs of action we may distinguish four classes:—

1. *Propensions*, bearing in the highest degree the character of subjective appetency and mere drift of nature and requiring from external objects the minimum of importunity and reaction to move response: viz, two having reference respectively to *food* and *sex* (appetites), and animal Spontaneity (the tendency to physical activity alternating with repose).

2. *Passions*: they are what we suffer at the hands of other objects—objects which are in every case painful and uncongenial; so that the emotions towards these objects are invariably *repulsions*, thrusting away what is hurtful or inharmonious, or else withdrawing us thence. The passions are three: towards an object of natural aversion immediately before us we feel *Antipathy*; towards that which has just hurt us, we experience *Anger*; towards that which menaces us with evil, we look with *Fear*.

Not one of the principles hitherto enumerated has any reference to *Persons*, or involves more than a relation to *things*,—*living things*, it may be, but nothing more. Two classes of active principles remain to be mentioned; and though in the first of these we find still some affinity with lower tribes of being, yet the special element of *personality* so predominates in their human manifestation, and even so reacts on them and exalts them in the animals that are companions of man, that in dealing with them we must regard ourselves as crossing the line, and say that, in a world without persons, they would fail of their proper idea and identity.

3. *Affections*: called so, because they take us and form us into a certain frame of mind *towards* other persons, and operate therefore as *attractions*, and not, like the passions, as *repulsions*. They belong to us as surrounded by beings more or less in our own image, and repeating to us our own experience; and the lowest condition of their existence is, the presence of *living creatures*, reminding us of our kind, if not belonging to it. Of these, the first in order, as the least exclusively human, is the *Parental*; the conditions of which are, that the beings on whom it is directed be, independently of us, the image of our essence, and, dependently upon us, the continuation of our existence. The second is the *Social*; directed not only to our like, as the former, but to our equals, as respondent natures, holding up the mirror to our being, and at once taking us out of ourselves and sending us into ourselves. Neither the family nor the community fulfils its idea

without the coexistence of the other; the home never reveals its true meaning or perfects its constitution but in society; and society never finds its soul or discloses its moral essence, till formed into an aggregate of families. The third affection, drawing us to the beings we interpret by ourselves, is *compassion*, the feeling that springs forth at the spectacle of suffering. There is no feeling which it is less possible to deduce from any interested source.

4. *Sentiments*: which direct themselves upon *ideal relations*, objects of apprehension or thought that are above us, yet potentially ours. They divide themselves no other than the faculties and sciences of our nature; and as that nature is intellectual, giving us a science of Logic; and imaginative, affording ground for an Aesthetic; and moral, giving rise to a doctrine of Ethics and Faith; so are there three corresponding sentiments, operating as the mainsprings of the respective faculties, and supplying the tension of all their activity: viz, *Wonder*, asking for Causality; *Admiration*, directed upon Beauty; and *Reverence*, looking up to transcendent Goodness. They all meet their objects first beyond the realm of mere phenomena, and at once attest and interpret an ulterior sphere of spiritual realities.

When we look back on the springs of action in their serial order, we cannot fail to notice the law of their succession. They are none of them mere egoistic phenomena, scintillating and quenched within our isolated history; they all have their external correlates. In the part they play within us, these correlates rise from a minimum to a maximum of qualitative influence; being of the Propensions, mere conditions; of the Passions, causes; of the Affections, personal objects; of the Sentiments, the perfect realisation.

These twelve primary principles are essentially disinterested in their action, simply impelling us hither and thither, without choice or reckoning of ours. But they cannot play their part on the theatre of a self-conscious nature, without our soon discovering what they do with us. Each of them, in the attainment of its end, yields us a distinct kind of satisfaction; and,

on next taking possession of us, finds us with a preconception of the experience to which it leads. These several satisfactions, it is manifest, may themselves become *ends*, a taste for realising which will constitute new springs of action, added on to the former, variously mingling with them, often quite ascendent over them.

These are the *secondary* principles; characterised by their interested nature, or invariable aim to produce certain states of ourselves. This change is great and ethically momentous; but as it is uniform throughout the list, it presents us with a series which is but the self-conscious counterpart of the primary principles, and which might be psychologically disposed of with this general description. The moral effect however of self-consciousness is very different in different parts of the series: some of the principles no sooner touch this point than they run out into ulterior forms more important than themselves, and demanding recognition by separate names. Thus we have:—

1. *Secondary Propensions*: appearing as love of Pleasure, Money, Power, the second being a development out of the first and third secondary spring.

2. *Secondary Passions*; the fondness for antipathy, or pleasure in hating, we call, as a feeling, Ill-will or Malice, and in its expression Censoriousness; the cherishing of resentment, Vindictiveness; of fear, Suspiciousness, or Mistrust.

3. *Secondary Affections*; may be classed together as Sentimentality.

4. *Secondary Sentiments*, giving rise to Self-culture, Aestheticism, and Interest in Religion.

There are numerous ulterior compounds, such as the love of Praise, Emulation, &c.; with the help of the laws of association, of sympathy, and of distance, these compound forms of motive can be easily resolved into their elements.

(b.) *Springs of Action: Moral Order.*

This classification does not follow any organic principle of growth; nor is it an arranging of the springs according to strength of impulse. It is an order of gradation according to

moral worth, and moral worth does not admit of further analysis. It is an attribute of the moral man and his characteristic. Now if it be true that each separate verdict of right and wrong pronounces some one impulse to be of higher worth than a competitor, each must come in turn to have its relative value determined in comparison with the rest; and, by collecting these series of decisions into a system, we must find ourselves in possession of a table of moral obligation, graduated according to the inner excellence of our several tendencies. This is wholly a task of introspective classification and comparative estimate. It is one followed, more or less, by the chiefs of both ancient and modern philosophy, and has fallen into disrepute mainly through the influence of writers who have approached the study of Morals from either the casuist's or the jurist's point of view. Martineau's table as finally arranged is as follows:—

Lowest.

1. Secondary Passions; Censoriousness, Vindictiveness, Suspiciousness.
2. Secondary Organic Propensions; Love of Ease and Sensual Pleasure.
3. Primary Organic Propensions:—Appetites.
4. Primary Animal Propension;—Spontaneous Activity (unselective).
5. Love of Gain (reflective derivative from Appetite).
6. Secondary Affections (sentimental indulgence of sympathetic feelings).
7. Primary Passions;—Antipathy, Fear, Resentment.
8. Causal Energy;—Love of Power, or Ambition; Love of Liberty.
9. Secondary Sentiments;—Love of Culture.
10. Primary Sentiments of Wonder and Admiration.
11. Primary Affections, Parental and Social;—with Generosity and Gratitude.
12. Primary Affection of Compassion.
13. Primary Sentiment of Reverence.

Highest.

We are now prepared for an exact definition of Right and Wrong; which will assume this form: Every action is *Right*, which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher: every action is *Wrong*, which, in presence of a higher principle follows a lower.

Have we, when we have proceeded thus far, got at a sufficient condition of duty? Does the statement square with the fact conveyed to us under the feeling of obligation? Martineau would be the last to say so: for, "without *objective* conditions, the idea of Duty involves a contradiction, and its phraseology passes into an unmeaning figure of speech". Now, remembering how in perception it is Self and Nature, in Morals Self and God, that stand face to face, we are not surprised to find that the moral order of the springs of action, properly arranged and sorted out, "fall into the systematic code of Divine Law". It is this theistic background that prevents us from regarding the theory as hanging in the air; it is owing to their springing from this source that the dictates of conscience obtain their unconditional authoritativeness. "If the sense of authority means anything, it means the discernment of something higher than we, having claims on our self,—therefore no mere part of it;—hovering over and transcending our personality, though also mingling with our consciousness and manifested through its intimations. If I rightly interpret this sentiment, I cannot stop within my own limits, but am irresistibly carried on to the recognition of another than I. Nor does that 'other' remain without further witness: the predicate 'higher than I' takes me yet a step beyond: for what am I? A *person*: 'higher' than whom no 'thing' assuredly,—no mere *phenomenon*,—can be; but only *another Person*, greater and higher and of deeper insight."¹⁾ This gives us a clue to the fact that Reverence is placed highest among the springs of action and not, say, Universal Benevolence; and further accounts for the absence of the Love of Virtue—at least under

1) *Ibid.* p. 104.

that name—from the list. “Reverence cares for right actions not simply as good phenomena, but chiefly as the expression of *right affection*, as functions of pure, of faithful, of self-devoted, of lofty character.”¹⁾ And “after one is lifted into Reverence his nature is enriched by a new affection and paramount motive, which, in the strictest sense, may be called the love of virtue, the devotion to right. Before, he had the feeling without the conception; now, he has the conception, as the centre and object of a deeper and larger feeling.”²⁾ So that Reverence is not only the highest spring, but also in the moral—or, more correctly, religious—man it is the feeling which urges him to adopt the higher of two competing springs. We thus understand how it is that we strictly *owe* to God conformity with our own ideal. Attaining it with ever such exactitude, we simply fulfil our obligation, and can pretend to no merit before Him.

What in the meantime is our relation to our fellowmen? “In all our dealings with one another, nay, in all our self-knowledge in presence of one another, we necessarily assume an invariable constitution of humanity in our separate personalities, and never relinquish this natural ground, except where we are forced from it by positive evidence of specialty. If I am justified in assuming in my neighbours an apprehension like my own of the equality of two vertical angles, can any reason be given why I may not in like manner assume that they feel with me the respective ‘authority’ of honour and perfidy? The supposition of ‘subjective’ morals is no less absurd than that of subjective mathematics.”³⁾ Accordingly there is nothing to prevent the acquisition of merit towards our fellowmen; for the authoritative measure of duty, in every transaction between different persons, is the *mutually understood ideal*. Martineau is far from maintaining that all men have come to an understood concurrence on matters of right; this would be to run in the face of present facts and close the avenue of progress in the future. His assumption is that of a common human

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 223.

²⁾ Ibid. p. 223.

³⁾ Ibid. pp. 102, 3.

nature, accompanied by an unequal development of that nature. But given a certain stage of development, then “however limited the range of our moral consciousness, it would lead us all to the same verdicts, had we all the same segment of the series under our cognisance.”¹⁾

We have seen what is to be understood by our duty to God and to our fellowmen. Is there such a thing as a Duty to ourselves? This is the question of the relation of Conscience to Prudence. The danger we have to guard against is that of digging ditches where nature has drawn only thin lines. Suppose, *e.g.*, we provisionally pronounce it the law of prudence to gratify our tendencies to action in the order of their eagerness, and live chiefly in the indulgence of the ruling passion, whatever it be, so that Prudence would be self-surrender to the strongest impulse as contrasted with Duty, self-surrender to the highest, still we should have to shade off the contrast, and that in two directions. For, on the one hand, the moral consciousness, though not presupposing any sentient effects of our activity, would soon be followed by them; because we cannot imagine the higher authority either obeyed or resisted without entailing its own inner sequel of satisfaction or shame. And on the other hand, the advantage of yielding to a vehement impulse may be dearly purchased at the cost of ulterior effects,—the consequences entailed by the order of the world and the sentiments of mankind, including our own. And we must always remember—however apt we may be to forget it—that the world where Duty is exercised is the same world as that in which Prudence has sway; our life is one, whatever our standpoint; and preference of a course of action on grounds of prudence has meaning only because it is essentially moral preference. So that it seems to us that Martineau draws a too hard and fast line between the two principles. Prudence, we are told, is evidently confined altogether to the secondary springs of action; while Conscience has a discriminating voice over all, primary and

1) *Ibid.* p. 61.

secondary. For by its definition Prudence is simply the act of the understanding in measuring and comparing the pleasurable effects on one's self of this or that mode of activity; and implies a *foresight* which can only come after experience and memory of what our impulses do with us. Conscience, on the other hand, is concerned with quite another order of differences;—differences of inherent excellence and authority, which by their very nature must be cognisable *prior* to action, and are accordingly not learned by experiment, but read off by *insight*, presenting themselves to consciousness as premonitions, not as the sequel, of conduct. Thus we find ourselves once again back at a graduated scale of excellence among our natural principles, quite distinct from the order of their intensity, and irrespective of the range of their external effects. The sensibility of the mind to the gradations of this scale is precisely what we call Conscience—the critical perception we have of the relative authority of our several principles of action. There is no analysis or research required; it is a choice of Hercules, only without the reasoning and the rhetoric; the claims are decided by a glance at their face.

What are we to say in general as to this ethical theory of motives? Nothing need be said in justification of the method, from the point of view of theory; this establishment of ethics on the basis of motive and personality is a redemption of it from the altar of materialism; for morality, if anything, is internal. There is a further gain in this—that the correct valuation of a motive includes within itself the valuation of the whole class of actions performed from that motive. But the method has its imperfections and indeed is only set forth as introductory to Applied Ethics. For in the solution of all ethical problems, we have successive recourse to two distinct rules; viz, the Canon of *Principles*, which gives the true moral criterion for determining the *right* of the case; and then, the Canon of *Consequences*, which gives the rational criterion for determining its *wisdom*. The former suffices for the estimate of Character; but, for the estimate of Conduct, must be supplemented by the latter. So that concrete examples

must first be resolved into the two aspects which they always mix up together; viz, 'what, in point of motive, is right relatively to the agent in his given position?' and 'What, in point of social effect, is the right mode of action to be instituted under the supposed condition?' But is it always possible to make this distinction between the form of a motive and its content? Would not that be a return to Kant's position of setting up the will without any object willed? Ought we not, with Sidgwick, to hold that it is the intention rather than the motive that must be judged, seeing that there is general agreement upon the fact that disastrously bad acts can follow upon the best of motives? This being once admitted, the further objection as to differences of opinion regarding the relative value of the various springs in the scale, would tend to be removed, for the consideration of results would tend to correct the prior estimate,—though such a calculation also tends of course to become subject to the same difficulties as we saw attached to the hedonistic calculus. This return to the empiricist position is however only what might have been expected; for this scale of relations aims at exhibiting the duty of the moral agent in each crisis of competitive impulse, as it is given him; but it does not profess to measure the comparative value of the several springs of action in human life as a whole. It is not the quality alone of the springs that concerns us; their frequency also must be taken into consideration. For "the limits within which the higher moral altitudes can be secured by voluntary command of favouring circumstance are extremely narrow. Go where we may, we carry the most considerable portion of our environment with us in our own constitution: from whose propensions, passions, affections, it is a vain attempt to fly."¹⁾

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 268.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD CONDUCT.

The opening pages of Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* are occupied with a discussion of the Metaphysics of Knowledge; they contain a polemic against the prevailingly naturalistic standpoint of utilitarian and evolutionist writers, and counsel a return to the idealism of Kant. According to Green idealism alone is capable of affording the true basis of a Theory of Knowledge and of the Good.

Every materialistic system must have its ground in experience. But 'experience' is a word of ambiguous meaning; it may mean a process of change, as when a plant is said to experience a succession of atmospheric or chemical changes; or it may mean a consciousness of that change as when we are aware of a change in our mental states. It is in this latter sense—as a consciousness of events as a related series—that experience can help to account for the knowledge of an order of nature, and experience in this sense cannot be explained by any natural history, properly so called. That there *is* an unalterable order of relations, if we could only find it out, is the presupposition of all our enquiry into the real nature of appearances. But what is implied in there being such a single, all-inclusive, system of relations? What is the condition of its possibility? The fact is, relation involves all the mystery of the existence of many in one: and the mystery can only be explained on the presupposition that there is something other than the manifold things themselves, which combines them without effacing their severality. With such a combining agency we are familiar as our intelligence. It is through it that the sensation of the present moment takes a character from comparison with the sensation of a moment ago, and that the occurrence, consisting in the transition from one to the other, is presented to us. If it were not for the action of something which is not either of them or both together, there would be no alternative between their separateness and their fusion. One might give place to the other, or

both together might be combined into a third; but a unity in which their distinctness is preserved could not be constituted without the relating act of an intelligence which does not blend with either. The same or an analogous action is necessary to account for any relation whatever—for a relation between material atoms as much as any other. If we suppose these atoms to be real otherwise than merely as for us, otherwise than in the 'cosmos of our experience', we must recognise as the condition of this reality the action of some unifying principle analogous to that of our understanding. So that the true account of the possibility of the existence of an unalterable system of relations is held to be that the concrete whole, which may be described indifferently as an eternal intelligence realised in the related facts of the world, or as a system of related facts rendered possible by such an intelligence, partially and gradually reproduces itself in us, communicating piecemeal, but in inseparable correlation, understanding and the facts understood, experience and the experienced world. As to what that consciousness in itself or in its completeness is, we can only make negative statements. *That* there is such a consciousness is implied in the existence of the world; but *what* it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially or interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience. Nature in its reality, or in order to be what it is, implies a principle which is not natural; we are most safe in calling this principle spiritual, because we are warranted in thinking of it as a self-distinguishing consciousness.

Let us note the application of this principle to *perception*. It is admitted on all hands that there can be no perception without (in Locke's phraseology) 'actual present sensation'; e.g. it is necessary to a perception of colour that there should be a sensation, arising out of a stimulus of the optic nerve by a particular vibration of ether. That vibration, however,—the external exciting cause of the sensation—is not the object perceived in the perception of the colour. That object indeed will not be the same for every percipient. It will vary

according to the extent of his knowledge and to the degree of attention aroused in him in the particular case. And any combination of the data of feeling as qualities of an object, or as facts related to a certain sensation, which the occurrence of that sensation may recall to us, implies the action of a subject which thinks of its feelings, which distinguishes them from itself, and can thus present them to itself as facts. The constituents of a perceived object, whether we consider them qualities or related facts, survive in their multiplicity at the same time that they constitute a single object. The condition of their doing so is the self-distinction of the thinking subject from the data of sensation, which it at once presents to itself in their severality as facts, and unites as *related* facts in virtue of its equal presence to them all. So that the ordinary perception of sensible things or matters of fact involves the determination of a sensible process, which is in time, by an agency that is not in time,—in Kant's language, a combination of 'empirical and intelligible characters'.

This however is only set forth as a statement of what is implied in perception as it is; what are we to say of its becoming, of its history, of the growth of perceiving consciousness? This will be found to be a history—not of consciousness itself, for it can have no history, but—of the process by which the animal organism becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness. "Our consciousness", in fact, may mean either of two things; either a function of the animal organism, which is being made, gradually and with interruptions, a vehicle of the eternal consciousness; or that eternal consciousness itself, as making the animal organism its vehicle and subject to its limitations in so doing, but retaining its essential characteristic as independent of time, as the determinant of becoming, which has not and does not itself become. "A familiar illustration may help to bring home that view of what is involved in the attainment of knowledge for which we are here contending. We often talk of reading the book of nature; and there is a real analogy between the process in which we apprehend the import of a sentence, and that by which we

arrive at any piece of knowledge. In reading the sentence we see the words successively, we attend to them successively, we recall their meaning successively. But throughout that succession there must be present continuously the consciousness that the sentence has a meaning as a whole; otherwise the successive vision, attention and recollection would not end in a comprehension of what the meaning is. This consciousness operates in them, rendering them what they are as organic to the intelligent reading of the sentence. And when the reading is over, the consciousness that the sentence has a meaning has become a consciousness of what in particular the meaning is,—a consciousness in which the successive results of the mental operations involved in the reading are held together, without succession, as a connected whole. The reader has then, so far as that sentence is concerned, made the mind of the writer his own.”¹⁾

Green maintains that there is no incompatibility between this doctrine and the admission that all the processes of brain and nerve and tissue, all the functions of life and sense, organic to this activity (though even they, as in the thinking man, cannot properly be held to be *merely natural*), have a strictly natural history. “And having admitted that certain processes in time are organic in man to that consciousness exercised in knowledge which we hold to be eternal, we have no interest in abridging these processes. If there are reasons for holding that man, in respect of his animal nature, is descended from ‘mere’ animals—animals in whom the functions of life and sense were not organic to the eternal or distinctively human consciousness,—this does not affect our conclusion in regard to the consciousness of which, as he now is, man is the subject; a conclusion founded on analysis of what he now is and does.”²⁾

So far we have dealt with perception. But the animal system is organic not only to *impressions*, but also to *wants*. These wants, with the sequent impulses, must be distinguished from the consciousness of wanted objects, and from the effort

1) *Prolegomena to Ethics*, pp. 75, 6. 2) *Ibid.* p. 87.

to give reality to the objects thus present in consciousness as wanted, no less than sensations of sight and hearing have to be distinguished from the consciousness of objects to which those sensations are conceived to be related. The transition from mere want to consciousness of a wanted object, from the impulse to satisfy the want to an effort for realisation of the idea of the wanted object, implies the presence of the want to a subject which distinguishes itself from it, and is constant throughout successive stages of the want. The idea of an end, which a self-conscious subject presents to itself, and which it strives and tends to realise, we call a *motive*. An appetite or want only becomes a motive, so far as upon the want there supervenes the presentation of the want by a self-conscious subject to himself, and with it the idea of a self-satisfaction to be attained in the filling of the want. The motive is not made up of a want and self-consciousness, any more than life of chemical processes and vital ones; but, indivisible as it is, it results, as perception results, from the determination of an animal nature by a self-conscious subject other than it; so results, however, as that the animal condition does not survive in the result. This will become more clear after an

Analysis of Desire. How do we come to desire food? What do we mean by the desire? Do we mean by it (1) hunger itself, as a particular sort of painful feeling; or (2) an instinctive impulse to obtain food, excited by this painful feeling but without consciousness of an object to which the impulse is directed; or (3) an impulse excited by the image of a pleasure previously experienced in eating, such as we seem to notice in a well-fed dog or cat when the dinner-bell rings; or (4) desire for an object in the proper sense; that is, for something which the desiring subject presents to itself as distinct at once from itself, the subject that desires, and from other objects which might be desired but for the time are not? In (1), desire being equivalent to hunger cannot be explained by it. As regards (2), the human infant seeks food instinctively without any previous experience of it as something that will remove the pain of hunger. And (3), the mere revival

in a sentient being of the image of a past pleasure, with the consequent impulse after the renewal of the pleasure, does not imply any consciousness by the subject of itself in distinction from the pleasure as the subject which has enjoyed it, and may enjoy it again, and which has also enjoyed other pleasures comparable with it; nor any consciousness of an objective world to which belong the conditions of the pleasure —the means to it, and its consequences. This is what gives its character to the moral and intellectual experience of man. There is for him a world of feeling, however limited in its actual range, yet boundless in capacity, of which he presents himself as the centre. It is by its relation to this world that any particular pleasure is defined for him as an object of desire, and thus, however animal in its origin, becomes to him through such reference to a 'before and after' of experience, what it is not to the animal that feels but does not distinguish itself from its immediate feeling. Apart from self-consciousness animal desire would have no moral character. There is a real unity in all our desires; only it is not Desire, but the self. But this also is the unity in all acts of intellect; how then are we to reconcile this with the obvious difference of intellect from desire?

Desire and Intellect. We must ascribe to the self-conscious soul or man two equally primitive, coordinate, possibilities of desiring and understanding. The element common to both lies in the consciousness of self and a world as in a sense opposed to each other, and in the conscious effort to overcome this opposition. Desire implies, on the part of the desiring subject (a) a distinction of itself at once from its desires and from the real world; (b) a consciousness that the conditions of the real world are at present not in harmony with it, the subject of the desire; (c) an effort, however undeveloped or misdirected, so to adjust the conditions of the real world as to procure satisfaction of the desire. So it is with the intellect: the establishment or discovery of relations —we naturally call it *establishment* when we think of it as a function of our own minds, *discovery* when we think of it as

a function determined for us by the mind that is in the world — is the essential thing in all understanding. Whatever the object which we set ourselves to understand, the process begins with our attention being challenged by some fact as simply alien and external to us, as no otherwise related to us than is implied in its being there to be known; and it ends, or rather is constantly approaching to an end never reached, in the mental appropriation of the fact, through its being brought under definite relations with the cosmos of facts in which we are already at home. This community of principle in the two cases we may properly indicate by calling our inner life, as determined by desires for objects, practical thought, while we call the activity of the understanding speculative thought. Nor is this all. The exercise of the one activity is always a necessary accompaniment of the other. No man learns to know anything without desiring to know it. Similarly, so soon as any desire has become more than an indefinite yearning for we know not what, so soon as it is really desire for some object of which we are conscious, it necessarily implies an employment of the understanding upon those conditions of the real world which make the difference, so to speak, between the object as desired and its realisation. Thus thought and desire are not to be regarded as separate powers, of which one can be exercised by us without, or in conflict with, the other. They are rather different ways in which the consciousness of self, which is also necessarily consciousness of a manifold world other than self, expresses itself. One is the effort of such consciousness to take the world into itself, the other its effort to carry itself out into the world.

Desire and Will. The distinction between desire and will seems firmly established in the experience of men as expressed in our habitual language, 'I should like to but I won't': we say 'a man may be torn by conflicting desires'. What are we to say to the distinction? Simply this:—that the final 'desire' differs in kind from the other competing impulses. It is what none of them were while competing, what none of them are, so far as any of them survive along with it. It

implies, as did none of them, the presentation of an object with which the man for the time identifies himself or his good, and a consequent effort to realise this object. He now, as he did not before, consciously directs himself to the realisation of a desired object. If he desired before, it was owing to the result of his organisation, of habits (his own or his ancestors'), of external excitement, &c.; it is at any rate in another way that he desires now. In fact, the final preference is an act of will. "When it is urged, therefore, that the will often conflicts with and overcomes a man's desires and that an act of will therefore must be other than a desire, we answer, certainly it is other than any such desire as those which it is said to overcome. But it is not other than desire in that sense in which desire is ever the principle or motive of an imputable human action, of an action that has any moral quality, good or bad, that can properly be rewarded or punished, or is fit matter for praise or blame."¹⁾ The true distinction lies between passions as influences affecting a man —among which we may include 'mere desires', if we please —and the man as desiring, or putting himself forth in desire for the realisation of some object present to him in idea, which is the same thing as willing. And so with regard to

Intellect and Will; speculation and moral action are coordinate employments of the same self-conscious soul, and of the same powers of that soul, only differently directed. Will then is equally and indistinguishably desire and thought as they are involved in the direction of a self-distinguishing and self-seeking subject to the realisation of an idea. The will is simply the man. Any act of will is the expression of the man as he at that time is. The motive issuing in his act, the object of his will, the idea which for the time he sets himself to realise, are but the same thing in different words. Each is the reflex of what for the time, as at once feeling, desiring, and thinking, the man is. The real nature of any act of will depends on the particular nature of the object in

1) *Ibid.* p. 149.

which the person willing for the time seeks self-satisfaction; and the real nature of any man as the subject of will—his character—depends on the nature of the objects in which he mainly tends to seek self-satisfaction. Self-satisfaction is the form of every object willed; but the filling of that form, the character of that in which self-satisfaction is sought, ranging from sensual pleasure to the fulfilment of a vocation conceived as given by God, makes the object what it really is. In general we may say that by will is understood an effort (or capacity for such an effort) on the part of a self-conscious subject to satisfy itself; by reason, in the practical sense, the capacity on the part of such a subject to conceive a better state of itself as an end to be attained by action. The true development of man, the only development in which the capabilities of his 'heaven-born' nature can be actualised, lies in the direction of union between the developed will and the developed reason in a life according to reason; a certain precedence is given to reason, because (though it is also the condition of vice), as rightly developed, it has the *initiative* of all virtue.

Characteristics of the Moral Ideal.

(a.) The *personal* character of the moral ideal. It is clearly of the very essence of the doctrine above advanced that the divine principle, which we suppose to be realising itself in man, should be supposed to realise itself in persons, as such. It is the irreducibility of this self-objectifying consciousness to anything else, the impossibility of accounting for it as an effect, that compels us to regard it as the presence in us of the mind for which the world exists. But it is only so far as we are members of a society, of which we can conceive the common good as our own, that the idea has any practical hold on us at all, and this very membership implies confinement in our individual realisation of the idea. Yet is not such confinement the condition of the only personality that we know? It is the condition of social life, and social life is to personality what language is to thought. There can be nothing in a nation however exalted its mission, or in a

society however perfectly organised, which is not in the persons composing the nation or the society. Our ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of personal worth. All other values are relative to value for, of, or in a person. It does not follow from this that all persons must be developed in the same way. Under any conditions possible, so far as can be seen, for human society, one man who was the best that his position allowed, would be very different from another who was the best that *his* position allowed. But, in order that either may be good at all in the moral sense, *i.e.* intrinsically and not merely as a means—in order that the idea of the human spirit may be in any sense fulfilled in him—the fulfilment of that idea in some form or other, must be the object in which he seeks self-satisfaction, the object for which he lives in living for himself. And it is only so far as this development and direction of personality is obtained for all who are capable of it (as presumably every one who says "I" is capable), that human society, either in its widest comprehension or in any of its particular groups, can be held to fulfil its function, to realise its idea as it is in God.

(b.) The *formal* character of the moral ideal or law. From the mere idea in a man 'of something', he knows not what, which he may and should become', to the actual practice which is counted morally good, it may naturally seem a long step. "If on being asked for an account of the unconditional good, we answer either that it is the good will or that to which the good will is directed, we are naturally asked further what then is the good will? The circle is only escaped in Utilitarianism because its ideal is not a *moral* ideal. By a moral ideal *we* mean some type of man or character or personal activity, considered as an end in itself."¹⁾ It is therefore not an illogical procedure, because it is the only procedure suited to the matter in hand, to say that the goodness of man lies in devotion to the ideal of humanity, and then that the ideal of humanity consists in the goodness of man.

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 205.

So that the basis of morality is the duty of realising an ideal which cannot be adequately defined till it is realised, and which, when realised, would no longer present itself as a source of duties, because the *should be* would be exchanged for the *is*. At the same time, then, that the categorical imperative can enjoin nothing *without liability to exception* but disinterested obedience to itself, it will have no lack of definite content. The particular duties which it enjoins will *at least* be all those in the practice of which, according to the hitherto experience of men, some progress is made towards the fulfilment of man's capabilities, or some condition necessary to that progress is satisfied.

The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideal.

(a.) *Reason as source* of the Idea of a Common Good. We may take it as an ultimate fact of human history—a fact without which there would not be such a history, and which is not in turn deducible from any history—that out of sympathies of animal origin, through their presence in a self-conscious soul, there arise interests as of a person in persons. The idea, then, of a possible well-being of himself, that shall not pass away with this, that, or the other pleasure; and relation to some group of persons whose well-being he takes to be as his own, and in whom he is interested in being interested in himself—these two things must condition the life of any one who is to be a creator or sustainer either of law or of that prior authoritative custom out of which law arises. Without them there might be instruments of law and custom: intelligent cooperating subjects of law and custom there could not be.

(b.) *The Extension of the Area of Common Good.* The earliest ascertainable history exhibits to us communities, relatively very confined, within any one of which a common good, and in consequence a common duty, is recognised as between the members of the community, while beyond the particular community the range of mutual obligation is not understood to extend. Among ourselves, on the contrary, it is almost an axiom of popular Ethics that there is at least a potential duty of every man to every man—a duty

which becomes actual so soon as one comes to have any dealings with the other. "No gradual modification of selfish fear or hope could yield a disposition of this kind; and if these were the sole original motives to civil or tribal or family obedience, it would be unintelligible that a state of mind should result, in which a man imposes duties on himself quite beyond the range of such obedience. But if at the root of such obedience, as well as of the institutions to which it has been rendered, there has been an idea of good, suggested by the consciousness of unfulfilled possibilities of the rational nature common to all men, then it is intelligible that, as the range of this idea extends itself—as it comes to be understood that no race or religion or status is a bar to self-determined co-operation in its fulfilment—the sense of duty which it yields, and which has gained its power over natural desires and aversions through generations of discipline in the family and the state, should become a sense of what is due to man as such, and not merely to the members of a particular community. The change is not necessarily in the strength, in the constraining power, of the feeling of duty—perhaps it is never stronger now than it may have been in an Israelite who would have yet recognised no claim in a Philistine, or in a Greek who would yet have seen no harm in exposing a sickly child—but in the conceived range of claims to which the duty is relative. Persons come to be recognised as having who would once not have been recognised as having any claim, and the claim of the *τινοι καὶ ὄμοιοι* comes to be admitted where only the claim of indulged inferiors would have been allowed before. It is not the sense of duty to a neighbour, but the practical answer to the question, who is my neighbour? that has varied."¹⁾

Thus in the conscientious citizen of modern Christendom reason without and reason within, reason as objective and reason as subjective, reason as the better spirit of the social order in which he lives, and reason as his loyal recognition and inter-

¹⁾ Ibid. p. 220.

pretation of that spirit—these being but different aspects of one and the same reality, which is the operation of the divine mind in man—combine to yield both the judgment, and obedience to the judgment, which we variously express by saying that every human person has an absolute value; that humanity in the person of every one is always to be treated as an end, never merely as a means; that in the estimate of that well-being which forms the true good every one is to count for one and no one for more than one; that every one has a 'suum' which every one else is bound to render him.

(c.) The *determination of the Idea of Common Good*. The ground of the desire for well-being is a demand for an abiding satisfaction of an abiding self. This demand has led to an ordering of life in which some permanent provision is made, better or worse, for the satisfaction of those interests which are not interests in the procuring of pleasure, but which may be described most generally as interests in the development of our faculties, and in the like development of those for whom we care—interests ranging, perhaps, from provision for one's family to the improvement of the public health or to the production of a system of philosophy. Just so far as he is interested in such objects must the individual indeed anticipate pleasure in their realisation, but the objects, not the pleasure, form the actuating content of his idea of true well-being. A transfer of his interest from the objects to the pleasure would be its destruction. On Green's view, the idea of the good is an idea which gradually creates its own filling. Moral development implies a progressive determination of the idea of the end itself, as the subject of it, through reflection on that which, under influence of the idea but without adequate reflection upon it, he has done and has become, comes to be more fully aware of what he has it in him to do and to become. Of a moral development in this sense we have evidence in the result; and we can understand the principle of it; but the stages in the process by which the principle thus unfolds itself remain obscure.

The Application of Moral Philosophy to Conduct.

What is of importance here is that one should keep alive that kind of sense of shortcoming in his motives and character, which is the condition of aspiration and progress towards higher goodness. This function of conscience expresses the aspiration, the effort, in man to be the best that he has it in him to be, from which is ultimately derived the thought that there is something which ought to be done, and the enquiry what in particular it is. It represents the quest for right conduct, as carried on by the individual under that sense of personal responsibility for doing the best, for attaining the highest, which can alone make him a reformer of his own practice or of the practice of others. As it stands before the mind of any particular person, the ideal will not directly yield an injunction to do anything in particular which is not in his mind already associated with good results, not to abstain from anything which is not already associated with evil results. But while it will not immediately instruct him as to the physical or social consequences of action, and through such instruction yield new commands, it will keep him on the look out for it, will open his mind to it, will make him ready, as soon as it comes, to interpret the instruction into a personal duty. For the spring of all moral progress can lie nowhere else than in the attraction of heart and will by the ideal of human perfection, and in the practical convictions which arise from it; but philosophy will still be needed as the interpreter of practical conviction, and it can itself alone provide for the adequacy of the interpretation.

“It is true, of course, that when the soul is suddenly called upon to face an awful moment, to which are joined great issues for good or evil in its moral history, it is not by ‘going over the theory of virtue in one’s mind’, not by any philosophical consideration of the origin and validity of moral ideas, that the right determination can be given. A judgment of the sort we call intuitive—a judgment which in fact represents long courses of habit and imagination founded on ideas—is all that the occasion admits of. But even in such cases it may make a great difference to the

issue, whether the inclination to the weaker or less worthy course is or is not assisted by a suggestion from the intellect that the counterinjunction of conscience is illusory. And in such an age as ours this suggestion is likely to be forthcoming, if scepticism has been allowed to pull to pieces the imaginative vesture in which our formative practical ideas have clothed themselves, without a vindication by philosophy of the ultimate authority of the ideas themselves, and of so much in the language of religious imagination as is their pure and (to us) necessary expression.”¹⁾

“It may thus fall to the moral philosopher, under certain conditions of society and of intellectual movement, to render an important practical service. But he will render it simply by fulfilling with the utmost possible completeness his proper work of analysis. As a *moral* philosopher he analyses human conduct; the motives which it expresses, the spiritual endowments implied in it, the history of thought, habits and institutions through which it has come to be what it is. He does not understand his business as a philosopher, if he claims to do more than this. He will not take it for a reproach to be reminded that no philosopher can supply a ‘moral dynamic’. The pretension to do so he would regard as a great impertinence. He finds moral dynamic enough in the actual spiritual nature of man, when that nature is regarded, as it is his business to regard it, not merely in its hitherto performance, but in its intrinsic possibilities. If he cannot help wishing for more, that is an accident of the very aspiration after perfection of conduct which constitutes the dynamic. His immediate business as a philosopher is not to strengthen or heighten this aspiration, much less to bring it into existence, but to understand it. As a man and a citizen, indeed, it is his function to serve as its organ; to give effect to it in his own conduct, to assist in communicating it to others. And since in being a philosopher he does not cease to be a man and a citizen, he will rejoice that the analysis, which alone

¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 350.

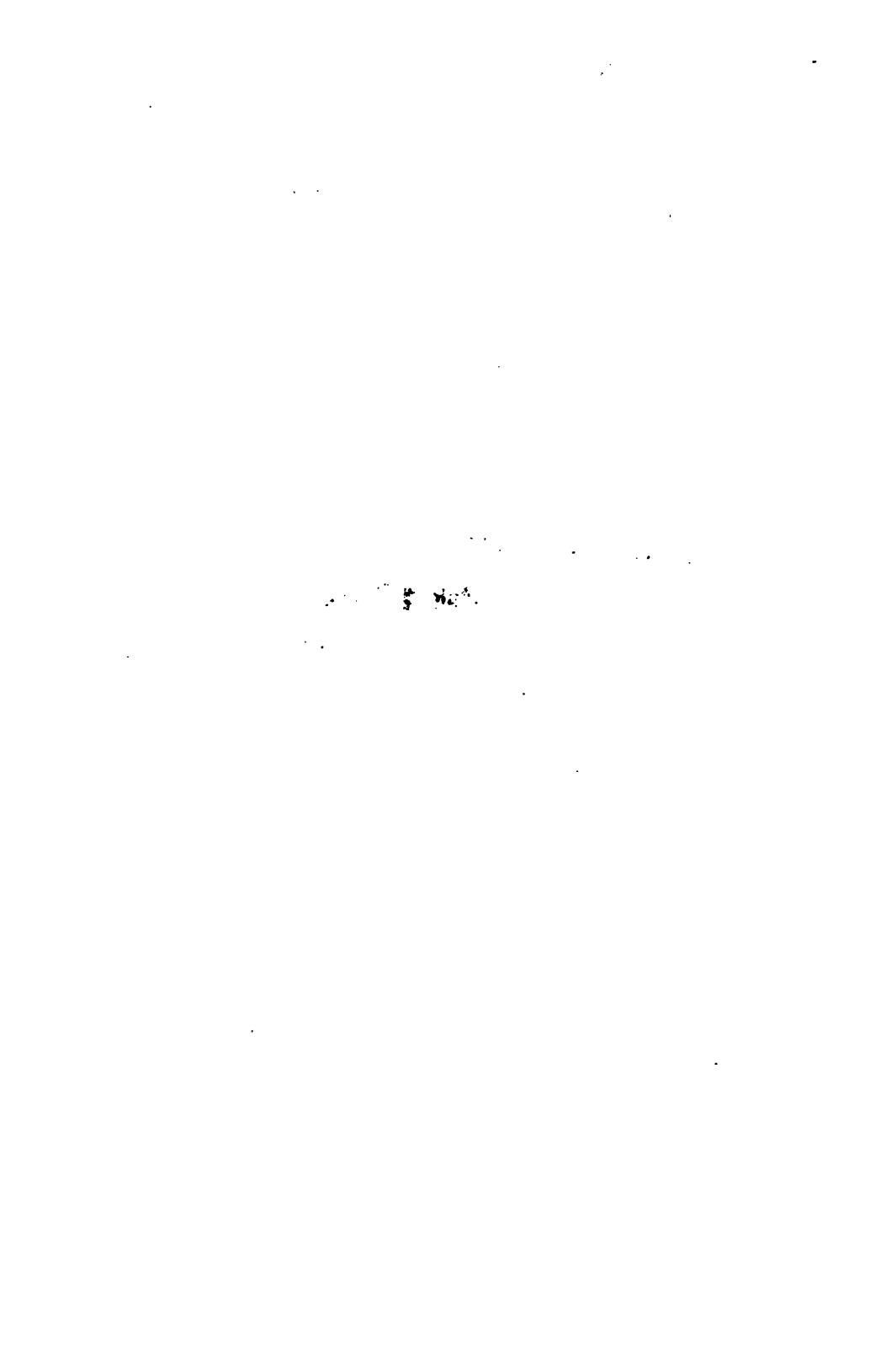
forms his employment as a philosopher, should incidentally serve a purpose subordinate to the 'moral dynamic'—that it should help to remove any obstacle to the effort of the human soul after a perfect life."¹⁾

¹⁾ *Ibid.* pp. 357, 8.

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